



THIS NEW EDITION OF THE ROMANCE OF
LANCELOT AND GUINEVERE, TAKEN FROM
SIR THOMAS MALORY'S 'MORTE D'ARTHUR',
WITH DRAWINGS BY LETTICE SANDFORD,
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PRESENTATION TO MEMBERS, MCMLIII.
THE TEXT ESTABLISHED BY PROFESSOR
VINAVER IS USED, WITH THE SPELLING
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FOREWORD

MANY noble and divers gentlemen,' wrote William Caxton, 'came and demanded me many and oft-times wherefore that I have not do made and enprint the noble history . . . of the most renowned Christian King, King Arthur, which ought most to be remembered among us Englishmen tofore all other Christian kings. . . . And many noble volumes be made of him and of his noble knights in French, which I have seen and read beyond the sea, which been not had in our maternal tongue. But in Welsh been many and also in French, and some in English, but nowhere nigh all. Wherefore such as have late been drawn out briefly into English, I have, after the simple cunning that God hath sent to me, under the favour and correction of all noble lords and gentlemen, enprized to enprint a book of the noble histories of the said King Arthur and of certain of his knights, after a copy unto me delivered, which copy Sir Thomas Malory did take out of certain books of French and reduce it in English.'

So it came about that Caxton rendered the greatest of all his services to English literature, by publishing *Le Morte Darthur*, 'the last day of July the year of Our Lord 1485', from his offices in the precincts of Westminster Abbey—within a hundred yards or so of the offices of the Folio Society, from which this book is published.

Caxton's book, reprinted by Wynkyn de Worde and by many publishers since, was for centuries the only form in which Malory's work was known to exist, a masterpiece of medieval English prose, a great popular storehouse of legend, and an inspiration to poets, from Edmund Spenser to Tennyson, Swinburne, Charles Williams and John Masefield.

Then in 1934 a remarkable discovery was made in Winchester College Library: the fifteenth-century manuscripts of eight Arthurian romances by Sir Thomas Malory. These are not the author's original manuscripts, for there is internal evidence that transcriptions by several scribes lay between the originals and the Winchester MSS. But it is clear that they are a great deal nearer to Malory than Caxton's edition is, that Caxton used very similar MSS., and that he made much more extensive alterations than had ever been suspected, in his attempt to weld the eight books into one. The MSS. enable the reader to appreciate much more fully Malory's development as a writer, from his somewhat clumsy first experiments to the tragic mastery of 'the Morte Arthur Sans Guerdon'. Finally, the MSS. give a little more information about the author. He has long been generally identified with Sir Thomas Malory of Newbold

Revell, in Warwickshire, who fought in the Wars of the Roses, served as Member of Parliament for his shire in 1456, was imprisoned several times for his numerous crimes (which included sheep-stealing, robbing an abbey, rape and attempted murder!) and died on March 4th, 1471. The MSS. make the identification not absolutely certain but more probable.

The MSS. were edited by Professor Eugène Vinaver of the University of Manchester, an acknowledged authority on the Arthurian legend, and published in 1947 by the Clarendon Press, Oxford, as 'The Works of Sir Thomas Malory' in three handsome volumes, which comprise an exact transcription of the MSS., in their fifteenth-century spelling, with full critical apparatus. In the present volume the Folio Society has printed for the first time a modernized version of part of the MSS., taken by permission from Professor Vinaver's edition. It is modernized in spelling and punctuation only, with no changes in the phrasing, and it consists of those three books which, combined, are the chief part of the history of Lancelot, together with the episode of Elaine from 'The Book of Sir Tristram', and a short account of Lancelot's part in the Quest for the Holy Grail. Together these make up one of the most moving and most famous love-stories in the literature of the world, the tale of Lancelot and Guinevere—and it is given here more nearly in Malory's own words than in any previous edition for the general reader.

J.J.

LANCELOT & GUINEVERE

PROLOGUE : I

IN the beginning of Arthur, he was chosen king by adventure and by grace, for the most party of the barons knew not that he was Uther Pendragon's son, but as Merlin made it openly known. But yet many kings and lords held him great war for that cause, but well Arthur overcame them all, for the most party days of his life he was ruled by the counsel of Merlin. So it fell on a time King Arthur said unto Merlin, 'My barons will let me have no rest, but needs I must take a wife, and I will none take but by thy counsel and advice.'

'It is well done,' said Merlin, 'that ye take a wife, for a man of your bounty and noblesse should not be without a wife. Now is there any,' said Merlin, 'that ye love more than another?'

'Yea,' said King Arthur, 'I love Guinevere the king's daughter, Lodegraunce of the land of Cameliard, the which holdeth in his house the Table Round that ye told me he had it of my father Uther. And this damsel is the most valiant and fairest that I know living, or yet that ever I could find.'

'Certes,' said Merlin, 'as of her beauty and fairness she is one of the fairest on live, but, an ye loved her not so well as ye do, I should find you a damsel of beauty and of goodness that should like you and please you, an your heart were not set; but there as man's heart is set he will be loth to return.'

'That is truth,' said King Arthur.

But Merlin warned the king covertly that Guinevere was not wholesome for him to take to wife. For he warned him that Lancelot should love her, and she him again; and so he turned his tale to the adventures of Sangreal.

Then Merlin desired of the king for to have men with him that should enquire of Guinevere, and so the king granted him. And Merlin went forth unto King Lodegraunce of Cameliard, and told him of the desire of the king that he would have unto his wife Guinevere his daughter.

'That is to me,' said King Lodegraunce, 'the best tidings that ever I heard, that so worthy a king of prowess and noblesse will wed my daughter. And as for my lands, I will give it him if I wist it might please him, but he hath lands enow, he needeth none. But I shall send him a gift that shall please him much more, for I shall give him the Table Round which Uther his father gave me. And when it is full complete, there is an hundred knights and fifty. And as for an hundred good knights I have myself, but I want fifty, for so many have been slain in my days.' And so King Lodegraunce delivered his daughter Guinevere

unto Merlin, and the Table Round with the hundred knights, and so they rode freshly with great royalty, what by water and by land, till that they came nigh unto London.

When King Arthur heard of the coming of Queen Guinevere and the hundred knights with the Table Round, then King Arthur made great joy for her coming, and that rich present, and said openly, 'This fair lady is passingly welcome to me, for I have loved her long, and therefore there is nothing so lief to me. And these knights with the Table Round please me more than right great riches.'

And in all haste the king let ordain for the marriage and the coronation in the most honourablest wise that could be devised. 'Now, Merlin,' said King Arthur, 'go thou and espy me in all this land fifty knights which be of most prowess and worship.' So within short time Merlin had found such knights that should fulfil twenty and eight knights, but no more would he find. Then the Bishop of Canterbury was fetched, and he blessed the sieges with great royalty and devotion, and there set the eight and twenty knights in their sieges. And when this was done Merlin said, 'Fair sirs, you must all arise, and come to King Arthur for to do him homage; he will the better be in will to maintain you.' And so they arose and did their homage. And when they were gone Merlin found in every siege letters of gold that told the knights' names that had sitten there, but two sieges were void.

And so anon came in young Gawayne and asked the king a gift. 'Ask,' said the king, 'and I shall grant you.'

'Sir, I ask that ye shall make me knight that same day that ye shall wed Dame Guinevere.'

'I will do it with a good will,' said King Arthur, 'and do unto you all the worship that I may, for I must by reason ye are my nephew, my sister's son.'

Then the king stablished all the knights, and gave them riches and lands and charged them never to do outrage neither murder, and always to flee treason, and to give mercy unto him that asketh mercy, upon pain of forfeiture of their worship and lordship of King Arthur for evermore; and always to do ladies, damsels, and gentlewomen and widows succour, strengthen them in their rights, and never to enforce them upon pain of death. Also that no man take no battles in a wrongful quarrel for no love, nor for no world's goods. So unto this were all knights sworn of the Table Round, both old and young. And every year so were they sworn at the high feast of Pentecost.

II

It befell that Merlin fell in dotage on the damsel that King Pellinore brought to court; and she was one of the damsels of the Lady of the Lake, that hight Nyneve. But Merlin would not let have her no rest, but always he would be with her. And ever she made Merlin good cheer till she had learned of him all manner of things that she desired; and he was assotted upon her, that he might not be from her.

So on a time he told to King Arthur that he should not endure long, but for all his crafts he should be put into the earth quick. And so he told the King many things that should befall, but always he warned the king to keep well his sword and the scabbard, for he told him how the sword and the scabbard should be stolen by a woman from him that he most trusted. Also he told King Arthur that he should miss him.

‘And yet had ye lever than all your lands have me again.’

‘Ah,’ said the king, ‘since ye know of your evil adventure, purvey for it, and put away by your crafts that misadventure.’

‘Nay,’ said Merlin, ‘it will not be.’

He departed from the king, and within a while the damsel of the Lake departed, and Merlin went with her evermore wheresomever she yode. And oftentimes Merlin would have had her privily away by his subtle crafts. Then she made him to swear that he should never do none enchantment upon her if he would have his will, and so he swore. Then she and Merlin went over the sea unto the land of Benwick thereas King Ban was king, that had great war against King Claudas.

And there Merlin spake with King Ban’s wife, a fair lady and a good; her name was Elaine. And there he saw young Lancelot. And there the queen made great sorrow for the mortal war that King Claudas made on her lands.

‘Take none heaviness,’ said Merlin, ‘for this same child young Lancelot shall within this twenty year revenge you on King Claudas, that all Christendom shall speak of it; and this same child shall be the most man of worship of the world. And his first name is Galahad, that know I well,’ said Merlin, ‘and syne ye have confirmed him Lancelot.’

‘That is truth,’ said the queen, ‘his name was first Galahad. Ah, Merlin,’ said the queen, ‘shall I live to see my son such a man of prowess?’

‘Yea, hardly, lady, on my peril ye shall see it, and live many winters after.’

Then soon after the lady and Merlin departed. And by ways he showed her many wonders, and so came into Cornwall. And always he lay about to have her maidenhood, and she was ever passing weary of him, and would have been delivered of him, for she was afearred of him for cause

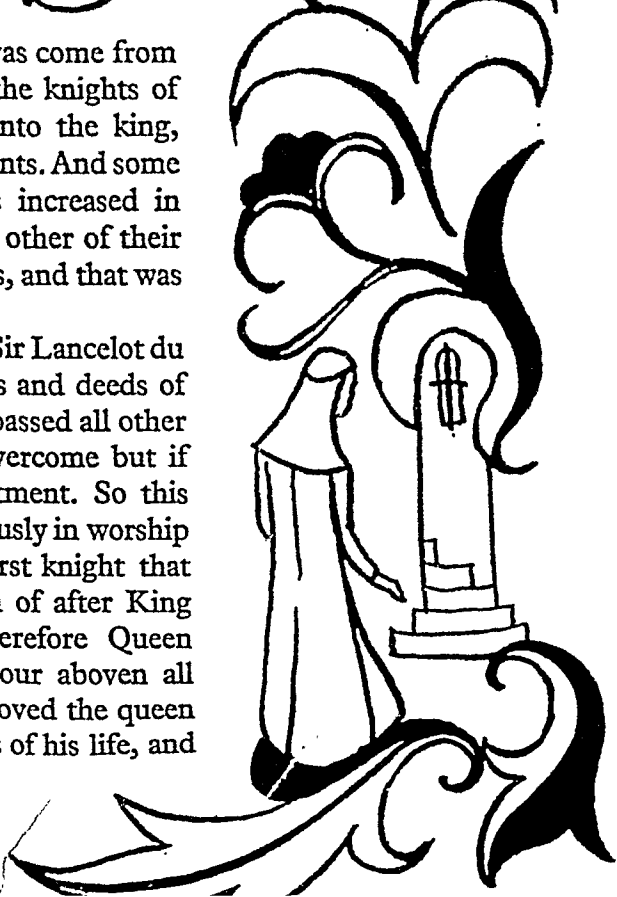
he was a devil's son, and she could not be skyft of him by no mean. And so on a time Merlin did show her in a rock whereas was a great wonder, and wrought by enchantment, that went under a great stone. So by her subtle working she made Merlin to go under that stone to let her wit of the marvels there, but she wrought so there for him that he came never out for all the craft he could do. And so she departed and left Merlin.

THE NOBLE TALE OF
SIR LANCELOT DU LAKE



S OON after that King Arthur was come from Rome into England, then all the knights of the Round Table resorted unto the king, and made many jousts and tournaments. And some there were that were but knights increased in arms and worship that passed all other of their fellows in prowess and noble deeds, and that was well proved on many.

But in especial it was proved on Sir Lancelot du Lake, for in all tournaments, jousts and deeds of arms, both for life and death, he passed all other knights, and at no time was he overcome but if it were by treason other enchantment. So this Sir Lancelot increased so marvellously in worship and honour; therefore he is the first knight that the French book maketh mention of after King Arthur came from Rome. Wherefore Queen Guinevere had him in great favour aboven all other knights, and in certain he loved the queen again aboven all other ladies, days of his life, and



for her he did many deeds of arms, and saved her from the fire through his noble chivalry.

Thus Sir Lancelot rested him long with play and game; and then he thought himself to prove in strange adventures, and bade his nephew, Sir Lionel, for to make him ready, 'for we must go seek adventures.' So they mounted on their horses, armed at all rights, and rode into a deep forest and so into a plain.

So the weather was hot about noon, and Sir Lancelot had great lust to sleep. Then Sir Lionel espied a great apple tree that stood by an hedge, and said, 'Sir, yonder is a fair shadow, there may we rest us and our horses.'

'It is truth,' said Sir Lancelot, 'for this seven year I was not so sleepy as I am now.'

So there they alighted and tied their horses unto sundry trees, and Sir Lancelot laid him down under this apple tree, and his helmet under his head. And Sir Lionel waked whiles he slept. So Sir Lancelot slept passing fast.

And in the meanwhile came there three knights riding, as fast fleeing as they might ride, and there followed them three but one knight. And when Sir Lionel him saw he thought he saw never so great a knight, nother so well faring a man, and so well apparelled unto all rights. So within a while this strong knight had overtaken one of the three knights, and there he smote him to the cold earth that he lay still; and then he rode unto the second knight, and smote him so that man and horse fell down. And so straight unto the third knight and smote him behind his horse arse a spear length. And then he alit down and reined his horse on the bridle, and bound all three knights fast with the reins of their own bridles.

When Sir Lionel had seen him do thus, he thought to assay him, and made him ready, and privily he took his horse, and thought not for to awake Sir Lancelot and so mounted upon his horse and overtook the strong knight. He bade him turn, and so he turned and smote Sir Lionel so hard that horse and man he bare to the earth. And so he alit down and bound him fast, and threw him over thwart his own horse as he had served the other three, and so rode with them till he came to his own castle. Then he unarmed them and beat them with thorns all naked, and after put them in deep prison where were many more knights that made great dole.

So when Sir Ector de Maris wist that Sir Lancelot was passed out of the court to seek adventures, he was wroth with himself, and made him

ready to seek Sir Lancelot. And as he had ridden long in a great forest he met with a man was like a forester.

'Fair fellow,' said Sir Ector, 'dost thou know this country or any adventures that been here nigh hand?'

'Sir,' said the forester, 'this country know I well. And hereby within this mile, is a strong manor, and well dyked, and by that manor, on the left hand, there is a fair ford for horse to drink of, and over that ford there grows a fair tree. And thereon hangeth many fair shields that wielded sometime good knights, and at the bole of the tree hangs a basin of copper and latten. And strike upon that basin with the butt of thy spear three times, and soon after thou shalt hear new tidings; and else hast thou the fairest [grace] that ever had knight this many years that passed through this forest.'

'Gramercy,' said Sir Ector, and departed. And came unto this tree, and saw many fair shields, and among them all he saw his brother's shield, Sir Lionel, and many more that he knew that were his fellows of the Round Table, the which grieved his heart, and [he] promised to revenge his brother. Then anon Sir Ector beat on the basin as he were wood, and then he gave his horse drink at the ford.

And there came a knight behind him and bade him come out of the water and make him ready. Sir Ector turned him shortly, and in fewter cast his spear, and smote the other knight a great buffet that his horse turned twice about. 'That was well done,' said the strong knight, 'and knightly thou hast stricken me.' And therewith he rushed his horse on Sir Ector, and caught him under his right arm, and bare him clean out of the saddle, and so rode with him away into his castle, and threw him down in middle of the floor.

Then this said Tarquin said unto Sir Ector, 'For thou hast done this day more unto me than any knight did this twelve year, now will I grant thee thy life, so thou wilt be sworn to be my true prisoner.'

'Nay,' said Sir Ector, 'that will I never promise thee, but that I will do mine advantage.'

'That me repenteth,' said Sir Tarquin. Then he gan unarm him, and beat him with thorns all naked, and sythen put him down into a deep dungeon, and there he knew many of his fellows.

But when Sir Ector saw Sir Lionel, then made he great sorrow.

'Alas, brother,' said Sir Ector, 'how may this be and where is my brother, Sir Lancelot?'

'Fair brother, I left him on sleep when that I from him yode, under an apple tree; and what is become of him I cannot tell you.'

'Alas,' said the prisoners, 'but if Sir Lancelot help us we shall never

be delivered, for we know now no knight that is able to match our master Tarquin.'

Now leave we these knights prisoners, and speak we of Sir Lancelot du Lake that lieth under the apple tree sleeping. About the noon there come by him four queens of a great estate; and, for the heat should not nigh them, there rode four knights about them, and bare a cloth of green silk on four spears, betwixt them and the sun. And the queens rode on four white mules.

Thus as they rode they heard a great horse beside them grimly neigh. Then they looked and were ware of a sleeping knight lay all armed under an apple tree. And anon as they looked on his face, they knew well it was Sir Lancelot, and began to strive for that knight and every of them said they would have him to her love.

'We shall not strive,' said Morgan le Fay, that was King Arthur's sister. 'I shall put an enchantment upon him that he shall not awake of all this seven hours, and then I will lead him away unto my castle. And when he is surely within my hold, I shall take the enchantment from him, and then let him choose which of us he will have unto paramour.'

So this enchantment was cast upon Sir Lancelot, and then they laid him upon his shield, and bare him so on horseback betwixt two knights, and brought him unto the Castle Chariot; and there they laid him in a chamber cold, and at night they sent unto him a fair damsel with his supper ready dight. By that the enchantment was past.

And when she came she saluted him, and asked him what cheer.

'I cannot say, fair damsel,' said Sir Lancelot, 'for I wot not how I came into this castle but it be by enchantment.'

'Sir,' said she, 'ye must make good cheer, and if ye be such a knight as is said ye be, I shall tell you more to-morn by prime of the day.'

'Gramercy, fair damsel,' said Sir Lancelot, 'of your good will.'

And so she departed, and there he lay all that night without any comfort. And on the morn early came these four queens, passingly well bysene, all they bidding him good morn, and he them again.

'Sir knight,' the four queens said, 'thou must understand thou art our prisoner, and we here know thee well that thou art Sir Lancelot du Lake, King Ban's son. And because that we understand your worthiness, that thou art the noblest knight living, and also we know well there can no lady have thy love but one, and that is Queen Guinevere, and now thou shalt her love lose for ever, and she thine. For it behoveth thee now to choose one of us four, for I am Queen Morgan le Fay, queen of the land of Gore, and here is the queen of North Galis, and

the queen of Eastland, and the queen of the Out Isles. Now choose one of us, which that thou wilt have to thy paramour, other else to die in this prison.'

'This is an hard case,' said Sir Lancelot, 'that other I must die other to choose one of you. Yet had I lever die in this prison with worship, than to have one of you to my paramour maugre mine head. And therefore ye be answered: I will none of you, for ye be false enchanter. And as for my lady, Dame Guinevere, were I at my liberty as I was, I would prove it on yours that she is the truest lady unto her lord living.'

'Well,' said the queens, 'is this your answer, that ye will refuse us?'

'Yea, on my life,' said Sir Lancelot, 'refused ye been of me.'

So they departed and left him there alone that made great sorrow.

So after that noon came the damsel unto him with his dinner, and asked him what cheer.

'Truly, damsel,' said Sir Lancelot, 'never so ill.'

'Sir,' she said, 'that me repentest, but an ye will be ruled by me, I shall help you out of this distress, and ye shall have no shame nor villainy, so that ye would hold my promise.'

'Fair damsel, I grant you, but sore I am of these queens' crafts afear'd, for they have destroyed many a good knight.'

'Sir,' said she, 'that is sooth, and for the renown and bounty that they hear of you they would have your love. And Sir, they say your name is Sir Lancelot du Lake, the flower of knights, and they be passing wroth with you that ye have refused them. But Sir, an ye would promise me to help my father on Tuesday next coming, that hath made a tournament betwixt him and the king of North Galis—for the last Tuesday past my father lost the field through three knights of Arthur's court—and if ye will be there on Tuesday next coming, and help my father, and to-morn by prime, by the grace of God, I shall deliver you clean.'

'Now, fair damsel,' said Sir Lancelot, 'tell me your father's name, and then shall I give you an answer.'

'Sir knight,' she said, 'my father's name is King Bagdemagus, that was foul rebuked at the last tournament.'

'I know your father well,' said Sir Lancelot, 'for a noble king and a good knight, and by the faith of my body, your father shall have my service and you both at that [day].'

'Sir,' she said, 'gramercy, and to-morn look ye be ready betimes, and I shall deliver you, and take you your armour, your horse, shield and spear, and hereby, within this ten mile, is an abbey of white monks, and there I pray you to abide me, and thither shall I bring my father unto you.'

within this three mile of this abbey. But, sir, ye shall send unto me three knights of yours, such as ye trust, and look that the three knights have all white shields, and no picture on their shields, and ye shall send me another of the same suit, and we four will out of a little wood in midst of both parties come and we shall fall on the front of our enemies and grieve them that we may. And thus shall I not be known what manner a knight I am.'

So they took their rest that night. And this was on the Sunday, and so the king departed, and sent unto Sir Lancelot three knights with four white shields. And on the Tuesday they lodged them in a little leaved wood beside thereas the tournament should be. And there were scaffolds and holes that lords and ladies might behold and give the prize.

Then came into the field the King of North Galis with nine score helms. And then the three knights of King Arthur's stood by themselves. Then came into the field King Bagdemagus with four score helms. And then they fewtered their spears, and came together with a great dash. And there were slain of knights at the first recounter twelve knights of King Bagdemagus' party, and six of the King of North Galis' side and party and King Bagdemagus his party was far set aside and aback.

With that came in Sir Lancelot and he thrust in with his spear in the thickest of the press, and there he smote down with one spear five knights, and of four of them he brake their backs. And in that throng he smote down the King of North Galis, and brake his thigh in that fall. All this doing of Sir Lancelot saw the three knights of Arthur's, and said 'Yonder is a shrewd guest, therefore have here once at him.' So they encountered, and Sir Lancelot bare him* down horse and man, so that his shoulder went out of lyth.

'Now it befalleth me to stir me,' said Sir Mordred, 'for Sir Mador hath a sore fall.' And then Sir Lancelot was ware of him, and gat a spear in his hand, and met him. And Sir Mordred brake his spear upon him, and Sir Lancelot gave him such a buffet that the arson of the saddle brake, and so he drove over the horse's tail, that his helm smote into the earth a foot and more, that nigh his neck was broke, and there he lay long in a swoon.

Then came in Sir Gahalantine with a great spear and Sir Lancelot against him, in all that they might drive, that both their spears to-brast even to their hands, and then they flang out with their swords and gave many sore strokes. Then was Sir Lancelot wroth out of measure, and then he smote Sir Gahalantine on the helm that his nose, ears and

*Sir Mador de la Porte.

mouth brast out on blood, and therewith his head hung low, and therewith his horse ran away with him, and he fell down to the earth.

Anon therewithal Sir Lancelot gat a spear in his hand, and or ever that spear brake he bare down to the earth sixteen knights, some horse and man, and some the man and not the horse, and there was none that he hit surely but that he bare none arms that day. And then he gat a spear, and smote down twelve knights, and the most party of them never throve after. And then the knights of the King of North Galis' party would joust no more, and there the gree was given to King Bagdemagus.

So either party departed unto his own [place], and Sir Lancelot rode forth with King Bagdemagus unto his castle, and there he had passing good cheer both with the king and with his daughter, and they proffered him great gifts.

And on the morn he took his leave, and told the king that he would seek his brother Sir Lionel, that went from him when he slept. So he took his horse, and betaught them all to God, and there he said unto the king's daughter, 'If that ye have need any time of my service I pray you let me have knowledge, and I shall not fail you, as I am true knight.'

And so Sir Lancelot departed, and by adventure he came into the same forest there he was taken his sleep before, and in the midst of an highway he met a damsel riding on a white palfrey, and there either saluted other.

'Fair damsel,' said Sir Lancelot, 'know ye in this country any adventures near hand?'

'Sir knight,' said the damsel, 'here are adventures nigh, an thou durst prove them.'

'Why should I not prove?' said Sir Lancelot, 'for for that cause come I hither.'

'Well,' said she, 'thou seemest well to be a good knight, and if thou dare meet with a good knight, I shall bring thee where is the best knight, and the mightiest that ever thou found, so thou wilt tell me thy name, and what knight thou art.'

'Damsel, as for to tell you my name I take no great force. Truly my name is Sir Lancelot du Lake.'

'Sir, thou beseemest well, here is adventures fast by that fall for thee. For hereby dwelleth a knight that will not be overmatched for no man I know but ye do overmatch him. And his name is Sir Tarquin. And, as I understand, he hath in his prison, of Arthur's court, good knights three score and four, that he hath won with his own hands. But when have ye done that journey ye shall promise me, as ye are a true knight,

for to go and help me and other damsels that are distressed daily with a false knight.'

'All your intent, damsel, and desire I will fulfil, so ye will bring me unto this knight.'

'Now, fair knight, come on your way.'

And so she brought him unto the ford and the tree where hung the basin. So Sir Lancelot let his horse drink, and sithen he beat on the basin with the butt of his spear till the bottom fell out. And long did he so but he sye no man. Then he rode endlong the gates of that manor nigh half-an-hour.

And then was he ware of a great knight that drove an horse afore him, and overthwart the horse lay an armed knight bounden. And ever as they came near and near, Sir Lancelot thought he should know him. Then was he ware that it was Sir Gaheris, Gawayne's brother, a knight of the Table Round.

'Now, fair damsel,' said Sir Lancelot, 'I see yonder a knight fast ybounden that is a fellow of mine, and brother he is unto Sir Gawayne. And at the first beginning I promise you, by the leave of God, for to rescue that knight. But if his master sit the better in his saddle I shall deliver all the prisoners that he hath out of danger, for I am sure he hath two brethren of mine prisoners with him.'

But by that time that either had seen other, they gripped their spears unto them.

'Now, fair knight,' said Sir Lancelot, 'put that wounded knight off that horse, and let him rest awhile, and let us two prove our strengths. For as it is informed me, thou doest and hast done me great despite, and shame unto knights of the Round Table, and therefore now defend thee!'

'An thou be of the Round Table,' said Tarquin, 'I defy thee and all thy fellowship.'

'That is overmuch said,' said Sir Lancelot, 'of thee at this time.'

And then they put their spears in their rests, and came together with their horses as fast as they might run, and either smote other in midst of their shields, that both their horses' backs brast under them, and the knights were both astonied. And as soon as they might they avoided their horses, and took their shields before them, and drew out their swords, and came together eagerly; and either gave other many strong strokes, for there might nother shields nother harness hold their strokes.

And so within a while they had both many grim wounds, and bled passing grievously. Thus they fared two hours and more trasing and

raising either other where they might hit any bare place. Then at the last they were breathless both, and stood leaning on their swords.

'Now, fellow,' said Sir Tarquin, 'hold thy hand a while, and tell me that I shall ask of thee.'

'Say on,' said Sir Lancelot. Then Sir Tarquin said, 'Thou art the biggest man that ever I met withal, and the best breathed, and as like one knight that I hate aboven all other knights. So be it that thou be not he I will lightly accord with thee, and for thy love I will deliver all the prisoners that I have, that is three score and four, so thou wilt tell me thy name. And thou and I will be fellows together, and never to fail the while that I live.'

'Ye say well,' said Sir Lancelot, 'but sithen it is so that I have, and may have thy friendship, what knight is he that thou hatest aboven all thing?'

'Faithfully,' said Sir Tarquin, 'his name is Sir Lancelot du Lake, for he slew my brother, Sir Carados, at the Dolorous Tower, that was one of the best knights on live; and therefore him I except of all knights, for may I him once meet the one shall make an end, I make mine avow. And for Sir Lancelot's sake I have slain an hundred good knights, and as many I have maimed all utterly that they might never after help themself, and many have died in prison. And yet have I three score and four, and all [shall] be delivered so thou wilt tell me thy name, so be it that thou be not Sir Lancelot.'

'Now see I well,' said Sir Lancelot, 'that such a man I might be, I might have peace, and such a man I might [be] that there should be mortal war betwixt us. And now, sir knight, at thy request I will that thou wit and know that I am Sir Lancelot du Lake, King Ban's son of Benwick, and very knight of the Table Round. And now I defy thee, and do thy best!'

'Ah,' said Sir Tarquin, 'thou art to me most welcome of any knight, for we shall never depart till the one of us be dead.'

Then they hurtled together as two wild bulls rushing and lashing with their shields and swords, that sometime they fell both on their noses. Thus they fought still two hours and more, and never would have rest, and Sir Tarquin gave Sir Lancelot many wounds that all the ground thereas they fought was all bespeckled with blood.

Then at the last Sir Tarquin waxed faint, and gave somewhat aback, and bare his shield low for weary. That espied Sir Lancelot, and leapt upon him fiercely and gat him by the beaver of his helmet, and plucked him down on his knees, and anon he rased off his helm, and smote his neck in sunder.

And when Sir Lancelot had done this, he yode unto the damsel and said, 'Damsel, I am ready to go with you where ye will have me, but I have no horse.'

'Fair sir,' said this wounded knight, 'take my horse and let me go into this manor, and deliver all these prisoners.' So he took Sir Gaheris' horse and prayed him not to be grieved.

'Nay, fair lord, I will that ye have him at your commandment, for ye have both saved me and my horse. And this day I say ye are the best knight in the world, for ye have slain this day in my sight the mightiest man and the best knight except you that ever I saw. But fair sir,' said Sir Gaheris, 'I pray you tell me your name.'

'Sir, my name is Sir Lancelot du Lake, that ought to help you of right for King Arthur's sake, and in especial for my lord Sir Gawayne his sake, your own brother. And when that ye come within yonder manor, I am sure ye shall find there many knights of the Round Table, for I have seen many of their shields that I know hang on yonder tree. There is Sir Kay's shield, and Sir Brandelis' shield, and Sir Galyhud's shield, and Sir Brian de Listonois his shield, and Sir Aliduke's shield, with many more that I am not now advised of, and Sir Marhaus', and also my two brethren's shields, Sir Ector de Maris and Sir Lionel. Wherefore I pray you greet them all from me, and say that I bid them to take such stuff there as they find, and that in any wise my two brethren go unto the court and abide me there till that I come, for by the feast of Pentecost I cast me to be there, for as at this time I must ride with this damsel for to save my promise.'

And so they departed from Gaheris, and Gaheris yode into the manor, and there he found a yeoman porter keeping many keys. Then Sir Gaheris threw the porter unto the ground and took the keys from him, and hastily he opened the prison door, and there he let all the prisoners out and every man loosed other of their bonds. And when they saw Sir Gaheris, they all thanked him, for they weened that he had slain Sir Tarquin because that he was wounded.

'Not so, sirs,' said Sir Gaheris, 'it was Sir Lancelot that slew him worshipfully with his own hands, and he greets you all well, and prayeth you to haste you to the court; and as unto you Sir Lionel and Sir Ector de Maris, he prayeth you to abide him at the court of King Arthur.'

'That shall we not do,' said his brethren, 'we will find him an we may live.'

'So shall I,' said Sir Kay, 'find him or I come to the court, as I am true knight.'

Then they sought the house thereas the armour was, and then they armed them; and every knight found his own horse, and all that longed unto him. So forthwith there came a forester with four horses laden with fat venison. And anon, Sir Kay said, 'Here is good meat for us for one meal, for we had not many a day no good repast.' And so that venison was roasted, sod and baken, and so after supper some abode there all night. But Sir Lionel and Sir Ector de Maris and Sir Kay rode after Sir Lancelot for to find him if they might.

Now turn we to Sir Lancelot, that rode with the damsel in a fair highway.

'Sir,' said the damsel, 'here by this way haunteth a knight that distresses all ladies and gentlewomen, and at the least he robbeth them other lieth by them.'

'What,' said Sir Lancelot, 'is he a thief and a knight and a ravisher of women? He doth shame unto the order of knighthood, and contrary unto his oath; it is pity that he liveth. But, fair damsel, ye shall ride on before yourself, and I will keep myself in covert; and that if he trouble you other distress you I shall be your rescue and learn him to be ruled as a knight.'

So this maid rode on by the way a soft ambling pace, and within a while came out a knight on horseback out of the wood, and his page with him. And there he put the damsel from her horse, and then she cried. With that came Sir Lancelot as fast as he might till he came to the knight, saying, 'Ah, thou false knight and traitor unto knighthood, who did learn thee to distress ladies, damsels and gentlewomen?'

When the knight saw Sir Lancelot thus rebuking him he answered not, but drew his sword and rode unto Sir Lancelot. And Sir Lancelot threw his spear from him, and drew his sword, and struck him such a buffet on the helmet that he clave his head and neck unto the throat.

'Now hast thou thy payment that long thou hast deserved.' 'That is truth,' said the damsel. 'For like as Tarquin watched to distress good knights, so did this knight attend to destroy and distress ladies, damsels and gentlewomen; and his name was Sir Peris de Forest Savage.'

'Now, damsel,' said Sir Lancelot, 'will ye any more service of me?'

'Nay, sir,' she said, 'at this time, but almighty Jesu preserve you wheresoever ye ride or go, for the courtest knight thou art, and meekest, unto all ladies and gentlewomen that now liveth. But one thing, sir knight, methinks ye lack, ye that are a knight wifeless, that ye will not love some maiden other gentlewoman. For I could never hear say that ever ye loved any of no manner of degree, and that is great pity. But it

is noised that ye love Queen Guinevere, and that she hath ordained by enchantment that ye shall never love none other but her, nother none other damsel nor lady shall rejoyce you; wherefore there be many in this land of high estate and low that make great sorrow.'

'Fair damsel,' said Sir Lancelot, 'I may not warne people to speak of me what it pleaseth them. But for to be a wedded man, I think it not; for then I must couch with her, and leave arms and tournaments, battles and adventures. And as for to say to take my pleasaunce with paramours, that will I refuse in principle for dread of God; for knights that be adventurous should not be advouters nother lecherous for then they be not happy nother fortunate unto the wars, for other they shall be overcome with a simpler knight than they be themself, other else they shall slay by unhap and their cursedness better men than they be themself. And so who that useth paramours shall be unhappy, and all thing unhappy that is about them.'

And so Sir Lancelot and she departed . . .

And then he mounted upon his horse, and rode into many strange countries, and through many waters and valleys, and evil was he lodged. And at last by fortune him happened, against night to come to a fair courtelage, and therein he found an old gentlewoman that lodged him with good will, and there he had good cheer for him and his horse. And when time was, his host brought him into a garret, over the gate, to his bed. There Sir Lancelot unarmed him, and set his harness by him, and went to bed, and anon he fell on sleep.

So after there came one on horseback, and knocked at the gate in great haste. When Sir Lancelot heard this he arose up and looked out at the window, and sye by the moonlight three knights come riding after that one man, and all three lashing on him at once with swords; and that one knight turned on them knightly again and defended him. 'Truly,' said Sir Lancelot, 'yonder one knight shall I help, for it were shame for me to see three knights on one, and if [he] be there slain I am partner of his death.'

And therewith he took his harness, and went out at a window by a sheet down to the four knights. And then Sir Lancelot said on high, 'Turn you, knights, unto me, and leave this fighting with that knight.'

And then they all three left Sir Kay, and turned unto Sir Lancelot, and assailed him on every hand.

Then Sir Kay dressed him to have holpen Sir Lancelot. 'Nay, sir,' said he, 'I will none of your help. Therefore, as ye will have my help, let me alone with them.' Sir Kay, for the pleasure of that knight,

suffered him for to do his will, and so stood on side. Then anon within seven strokes, Sir Lancelot had stricken them to the earth.

And then they all three cried 'Sir knight, we yield us unto you as a man of might makeless.'

'As to that, I will not take your yielding unto me, but so that ye will yield you unto this knight, and on that covenant I will save your lives, and else not.'

'Fair knight, that were us loth, for as for that knight, we chased him hither, and had overcome him had not ye been. Therefore to yield us unto him it were no reason.'

'Well, as to that, advise you well, for ye may choose whether ye will die other live. For an ye be yolden it shall be unto Sir Kay.'

'Now, fair knight,' they said, 'in saving of our lives we will do as thou commandest us.'

'Then shall ye,' said Sir Lancelot, 'on Whitsunday next coming, go unto the court of King Arthur and there shall ye yield you unto Queen Guinevere, and put you all three in her grace and mercy, and say that Sir Kay sent you thither to be her prisoners.'

'Sir,' they said, 'it shall be done, by the faith of our bodies, an we be men living.' And there they swore every knight upon his sword, and so Sir Lancelot suffered them to depart.

And then Sir Lancelot knocked at the gate with the pommel of his sword, and with that came his host, and in they entered, he and Sir Kay. 'Sir,' said his host, 'I weened ye had been in your bed.'

'So I was, but I arose and leapt out at my window for to help an old fellow of mine.'

So when they came nigh the light, Sir Kay knew well it was Sir Lancelot, and therewith he kneeled down and thanked him of all his kindness that he had holpen him twice from the death.

'Sir,' he said, 'I have nothing done but that me ought for to do. And ye are welcome, and here shall ye repose you and take your rest.'

When Sir Kay was unarmed, he asked after meat. Anon there was meat fetched for him, and he ate strongly. And when he had supped they went to their beds and were lodged together in one bed.

So on the morn Sir Lancelot arose early, and left Sir Kay sleeping. And Sir Lancelot took Sir Kay's armour and his shield, and armed him, and so he went to the stable, and saddled his horse, and took his leave of his host, and he departed. Then soon after arose Sir Kay and missed Sir Lancelot, and then he espied that he had his armour and his horse.

'Now by my faith I know well that he will grieve some of the court of King Arthur, for on him knights will be bold, and deem that it is I,

and that will beguile them. And bycause of his armour and shield I am sure I shall ride in peace.' And then soon departed Sir Kay and thanked his host.

Now turn we unto Sir Lancelot that had ridden long in a great forest . . .

And there he met with a damsel, the which knew him well. And she said on loud, 'Well be ye found, my lord. And now I require you of your knighthood, help my brother that is sore wounded, and never stinteth bleeding; for this day he fought with Sir Gilbert the Bastard and slew him in plain battle, and there was my brother sore wounded. And there is a lady, a sorceress, that dwelleth in a castle here beside, and this day she told me my brother's wound should never be whole till I could find a knight would go into the Chapel Perilous, and there he should find a sword and a bloody cloth that the wounded knight was lapped in, and a piece of that cloth and that sword should heal my brother's wounds, with that his wounds were searched with the sword and the cloth.'

'This is a marvellous thing,' said Sir Lancelot, 'but what is your brother's name?'

'Sir,' she said, 'Sir Meliot de Logres.'

'That me repenteth,' said Sir Lancelot, 'for he is a fellow of the Table Round, and to his help I will do my power.'

Then she said, 'Sir, follow ye even this highway, and it will bring you to the Chapel Perilous, and here I shall abide till God send you again. And if you speed not I know no knight living that may achieve that adventure.'

Right so Sir Lancelot departed, and when he came to the Chapel Perilous he alit down, and tied his horse unto a little gate. And as soon as he was within the churchyard he saw on the front of the chapel many fair rich shields turned up-so-down, and many of the shields Sir Lancelot had seen knights bear beforehand. With that he saw by him there stand thirty great knights, more by a yard than any man that ever he had seen, and all they grinned and gnashed at Sir Lancelot. And when he saw their countenance he dread him sore, and so put his shield before him, and took his sword in his hand ready unto battle.

And they were all armed all in black harness ready with their shields and their swords ready drawn. And as Sir Lancelot would have gone through them, they scattered on every side of him and gave him the way, and therewith he waxed bold, and entered into the chapel. And then he saw no light but a dim lamp brenning, and then was he ware of

a corpse hilled with a cloth of silk. Then Sir Lancelot stooped down, and cut a piece away of that cloth, and then it fared under him as the ground had quaked a little; therewithal he feared.

And then he saw a fair sword lie by the dead knight, and that he gat in his hand and hied him out of the chapel. Anon as ever he was in the chapel yard all the knights spake to him with grimly voices, and said, 'Knight, Sir Lancelot, lay that sword from thee or thou shalt die.'

'Whether I live other die,' said Sir Lancelot, 'with no words grete get ye it again. Therefore fight for it an ye list.'

Then right so he passed throughout them.

And beyond the chapel yard there met him a fair damsel, and said, 'Sir Lancelot, leave that sword behind thee, or thou wilt die for it.'

'I leave it not,' said Sir Lancelot, 'for no threatening.'

'No,' said she, 'an thou didst leave that sword, Queen Guinevere should thou never see.'

'Then were I a fool an I would leave this sword.'

'Now, gentle knight,' said the damsel, 'I require thee to kiss me but once.'

'Nay,' said Sir Lancelot, 'that God me forbid.' 'Well, sir,' said she, 'an thou hadst kissed me thy life days had be done. And now, alas,' she said, 'I have lost all my labour, for I ordained this chapel for thy sake, and for Sir Gawayne. And once I had him within me, and at that time he fought with this knight that lieth dead in yonder chapel, Sir Gilbert the Bastard; and at that time he smote the left hand off Sir Gilbert.'

'And, Sir Lancelot, now I tell thee, I have loved thee this seven year, [but] there may no woman have thy love but Queen Guinevere. But sithen I may not rejoice thee nother thy body on live, I had kept no more joy in this world but to have thy body dead. Then would I have balmed it and sered it, and so to have kept it my life days, and daily I should have clipped thee, and kissed thee, in despite of Queen Guinevere.'

'Ye say well,' said Sir Lancelot. 'Jesu preserve me from your subtle crafts.'

And therewithal he took his horse and so departed from her. And as the book saith, when Sir Lancelot was departed she took such sorrow that she died within a fourteen night; and her name was Hallewes the sorceress, Lady of the Castle Nygurmous.

And anon Sir Lancelot met with the damsel, Sir Meliot's sister, and when she saw him she clapped her hands and wept for joy. And then they rode unto a castle thereby where lay Sir Meliot, and anon as Sir Lancelot saw him he knew him, but he was passing pale as the earth for bleeding.

When Sir Meliot saw Sir Lancelot he kneeled upon his knees and cried on height: 'Ah, lord Sir Lancelot, help me anon.' Then Sir Lancelot leapt unto him and touched his wounds with Sir Gilbert's sword, and then he wiped his wounds with a part of the bloody cloth that Sir Gilbert was wrapped in, and anon an wholer man in his life was he never. And then there was great joy between them, and they made Sir Lancelot all the cheer that they might. And so on the morn Sir Lancelot took his leave, and bade Sir Meliot hie him 'to the court of my lord Arthur, for it draweth nigh to the Feast of Pentecost. And there by the grace of God ye shall find me.' And therewith they departed . . .

So Sir Lancelot rode many wild ways, throughout moors and mares, and as he rode in a valley he saw a knight chasing a lady, with a naked sword, to have slain her. And by fortune as this knight should have slain this lady, she cried on Sir Lancelot and prayed him to rescue her.

When Sir Lancelot saw that mischief, he took his horse and rode between them, saying,

'Knight, fie for shame, why wilt thou slay this lady? [Thou dost] shame unto thee and all knights.'

'What hast thou to do betwixt me and my wife?' said the knight. 'I will slay her maugre thine head.'

'That shall ye not,' said Sir Lancelot, 'for rather we will have ado together.' 'Sir Lancelot,' said the knight, 'thou dost not thy part, for this lady hath betrayed me.'

'It is not so,' said the lady, 'truly he saith wrong on me. And for because I love [and] cherish my cousin germain, he is jealous betwixt me and him; and as I must answer to God there was never sin betwixt us, none such things. But, sir,' said the lady, 'as thou art called the worshipfullest knight of the world, I require thee of true knighthood, keep me and save me, for whatsoever he say he will slay me, for he is without mercy.'

'Have ye no doubt; it shall not lie in his power.'

'Sir,' said the knight, 'in your sight I will be ruled as ye will have me.' And so Sir Lancelot rode on the one side and she on the other side. And he had not ridden but a while, but the knight bade Sir Lancelot turn him and look behind him, and said, 'Sir, yonder come men of arms after [us] riding.'

And so Sir Lancelot turned him and thought no treason, and therewith was the knight and the lady on one side, and suddenly he swapped off the lady's head. And when Sir Lancelot had espied him what he had done, he said, and so called him; 'Traitor, thou hast shamed me for

ever.' And suddenly Sir Lancelot alit off his horse, and pulled out his sword to slay him. And therewithal he fell to the earth, and gripped Sir Lancelot by the thighs, and cried mercy.

'Fie on thee,' said Sir Lancelot, 'thou shameful knight! Thou mayest have no mercy, and therefore arise and fight with me!'

'Nay,' said the knight, 'I will never arise till ye grant me mercy.'

'Now will I proffer thee fair, I will unarm me unto my shirt, and my sword in my hand. And if thou canst slay me, quit be thou for ever.'

'Nay, sir, that will I never.'

'Well,' said Sir Lancelot, 'take this lady and the head, and bear [it] upon thee, and here shalt thou swear upon my sword, to bear it always upon thy back, and never to rest till thou come to my lady Queen Guinevere.'

'Sir, that will I do, by the faith of my body.'

'Now, what is your name?'

'Sir, my name is Sir Pedivere.'

'In a shameful hour wert thou born,' said Sir Lancelot.

So Sir Pedivere departed with the lady dead and the head together, and found the queen with King Arthur at Winchester; and there he told all the truth.

'Sir knight,' said the queen, 'this is an horrible deed and a shameful, and a great rebuke unto Sir Lancelot; but notwithstanding his worship is known in many divers countries. But this shall I give you in penance; make ye as good shift as ye can, ye shall bear this lady with you on horseback unto the Pope of Rome, and of him receive your penance for your foul deeds. And ye shall never rest one night thereas ye do another. And ye go to any bed the dead body shall lie with you.'

This oath there he made, and so departed. And as it telleth in the French book, when he came unto Rome, the Pope there bad him go again unto Queen Guinevere, and in Rome was his lady buried by the Pope's commandment. And after this knight Sir Pedivere fell to great goodness, and was an holy man and an hermit.

Now turn we unto Sir Lancelot du Lake, that came home two days before the Feast of Pentecost, and the king and all the court were passing fain [of his coming] . . . And ever now and now came all the knights home that were prisoners with Sir Tarquin and they all honoured Sir Lancelot.

When Sir Gaheris heard them speak, he said, 'I saw all the battle from the beginning to the ending,' and there he told King Arthur all how it was, and how Sir Tarquin was the strongest knight that ever he

saw except Sir Lancelot, and there were many knights bare him record, three score.

Then Sir Kay told the king how Sir Lancelot rescued him when he should have been slain, and how 'he made the three knights yield them to me, and not to him.' And there they were all three, and bare record. 'And by Jesu,' said Sir Kay, 'Sir Lancelot took my harness and left me his and I rode in good peace, and no man would have ado with me.' . . .

And then Sir Meliot de Logres came home, and told him and the king how Sir Lancelot had saved him from the death. And all his deeds were known, how the queens, sorceresses, four, had him in prison, and how he was delivered by the King Bagdemagus's daughter.

Also there was told all the great [deeds of] arms that Sir Lancelot did betwixt the two kings, that is for to say the King of North Galis and King Bagdemagus. All the truth Sir Gahalantine did tell, and Sir Mador de la Porte and Sir Mordred, for they were at the same tournament.

Then came in the lady that knew Sir Lancelot when that he wounded Sir Belleus at the pavilion. And there, at request of Sir Lancelot, Sir Belleus was made knight of the Round Table.

And so at that time Sir Lancelot had the greatest name of any knight of the world, and most he was honoured of high and low.

LANCELOT & ELAINE



NOW . . . speak we of Sir Lancelot du Lake, and of Sir Galahad, Sir Lancelot's son, how he was begotten, and in what manner.

As the book of French maketh mention, afore the time that Sir Galahad was begotten or born, there came in an hermit unto King Arthur upon Whitsunday, as the knights sat at the Table Round. And when the hermit saw the Siege Perilous, he asked the king and all the knights why that siege was void.

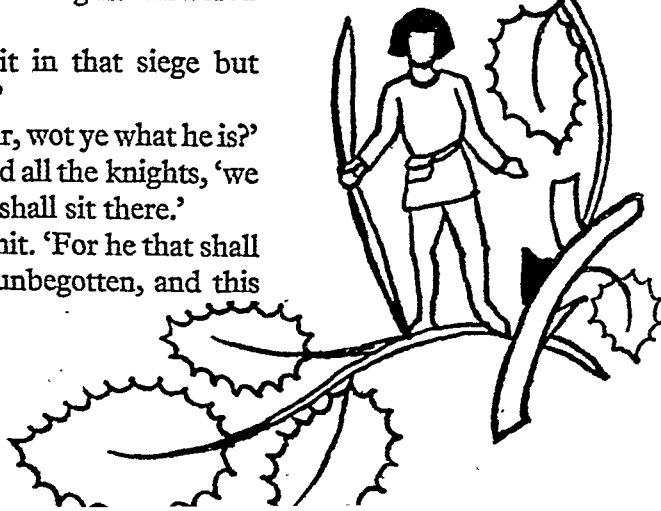
Then King Arthur for all the knights answered and said,

'There shall never none sit in that siege but one, but if he be destroyed.'

'Then,' said the hermit, 'Sir, wot ye what he is?'

'Nay,' said King Arthur and all the knights, 'we know not who is he yet that shall sit there.'

'Then wot I,' said the hermit. 'For he that shall sit there is yet unborn and unbegotten, and this



same year he shall be begotten that shall sit in that Siege Perilous, and he shall win the Sangreal.' When this hermit had made this mention he departed from the court of King Arthur.

And so after this feast Sir Lancelot rode on his adventure, till on a time by adventure he passed over the Pont de Corbin. And there he saw the fairest tower that ever he saw, and there under was a fair little town full of people. And all the people, men and women, cried at once,

'Welcome, Sir Lancelot, the flower of knighthood! For by thee all we shall be holpen out of danger.'

'What mean ye,' said Sir Lancelot, 'that ye cry thus upon me?'

'Ah, fair knight,' said they all, 'here is within this tower a dolorous lady that hath been there in pains many winters and days, for ever she boileth in scalding water. And but late,' said all the people, 'Sir Gawayne was here and he might not help her, and so he left her in pain still.'

'Peradventure so may I,' said Sir Lancelot, 'leave her in pain as well as Sir Gawayne.'

'Nay,' said the people, 'we know well that it is ye, Sir Lancelot, that shall deliver her.'

'Well,' said Sir Lancelot, 'then tell me what I shall do.'

And so anon they brought Sir Lancelot into the tower. And when he came to the chamber thereas this lady was, the doors of iron unlocked and unbolted, and so Sir Lancelot went into the chamber that was as hot as any stew. And there Sir Lancelot took the fairest lady by the hand that ever he saw, and she was as naked as a needle. And by enchantment Queen Morgan le Fay and the Queen of North Galis had put her there in that pains, by cause she was called the fairest lady of that country; and there she had been five years, and never might she be delivered out of her pains unto the time the best knight of the world had taken her by the hand.

Then the people brought her clothes. And when she was arrayed, Sir Lancelot thought she was the fairest lady that ever he saw, but if it were Queen Guinevere. Then this lady said to Sir Lancelot,

'Sir, if it please you will ye go with me hereby into a chapel that we may give loving to God?'

'Madam,' said Sir Lancelot, 'come on with me, and I will go with you.'

So when they came there and they gave thankings to God, all the people, both learned and lewd, and said,

'Sir knight, sin ye have delivered this lady, ye must deliver us also from a serpent which is here in a tomb'

Then Sir Lancelot took his shield and said,
'Sirs, bring me thither, and what that I may do to the pleasure of
God and of you I shall do.'

So when Sir Lancelot came thither he saw written upon the tomb
with letters of gold that said thus:

HERE SHALL COME A LEOPARD OF KING'S BLOOD, AND
HE SHALL SLAY THIS SERPENT. AND THIS LEOPARD
SHALL ENGENDER A LION IN THIS FOREIGN COUNTRY,
WHICH LION SHALL PASS ALL OTHER KNIGHTS.

So when Sir Lancelot had lift up the tomb, there came out an horrible
and a fiendly dragon, spitting wild fire out of his mouth. Then Sir
Lancelot drew his sword and fought with that dragon long, and at the
last with great pain Sir Lancelot slew that dragon.

And therewithal came King Pelles, the good and noble king, and
saluted Sir Lancelot, and he him again.

'Now, fair knight,' said the king, 'what is your name? I require you
of your knighthood tell ye me!'

'Sir,' said Sir Lancelot, 'wit you well my name is Sir Lancelot du
Lake.'

'And my name is King Pelles, king of the foreign country, and cousin
nigh unto Joseph of Arimathea.' And then either of them made much
of other, and so they went into the castle to take their repast. And anon
there came in a dove at a window, and in her mouth there seemed a
little censer of gold, and therewithal there was such a savour as all the
spicery of the world had been there. And forthwithal there was upon
the table all manner of meats and drinks that they could think upon.

So there came in a damsel passing fair and young, and she bare a
vessel of gold betwixt her hands; and thereto the king kneeled devoutly
and said his prayers, and so did all that were there.

'Ah, Jesu,' said Sir Lancelot, 'what may this mean?'

'Sir,' said the king, 'this is the richest thing that any man hath living,
and when this thing goeth abroad, the Round Table shall be broken
for a season. And wit you well,' said the king, 'this is the Holy Sangreal
that ye have here seen.'

So the king and Sir Lancelot led their life the most part of that day
together. And fain would King Pelles have found the mean that Sir
Lancelot should have lain by his daughter, fair Elaine, and for this
intent: the king knew well that Sir Lancelot should get a pucell upon

his daughter, which should be called Sir Galahad, the good knight by whom all the foreign country should be brought out of danger, and by him the Holy Grail should be achieved.

Then came forth a lady that hight Dame Brusen, and she said unto the king:

‘Sir, wit you well Sir Lancelot loveth no lady in the world but all only Queen Guinevere. And therefore work ye by my counsel, and I shall make him to lie with your daughter, and he shall not wit but that he lieth by Queen Guinevere.’

‘Ah, fair lady,’ said the king, ‘hope ye that ye may bring this matter about?’

‘Sir,’ said she, ‘upon pain of my life let me deal.’

For this Dame Brusen was one of the greatest enchantresses that was that time in the world.

And so anon by Dame Brusen’s wit she made one to come to Sir Lancelot that he knew well, and this man brought him a ring from Queen Guinevere like as it had come from her [and such one as she was wont for the most part to wear]. And when Sir Lancelot saw that token wit you well he was never so fain.

‘Where is my lady?’ said Sir Lancelot.

‘In the castle of Case,’ said the messenger, ‘but five mile hence.’

Then thought Sir Lancelot to be there the same night. And then this Dame Brusen, by the commandment of King Pelles, she let send Elaine to this castle with twenty-five knights unto the castle of Case.

Then Sir Lancelot against night rode unto the castle, and there anon he was received worshipfully with such people, to his seeming, as were about Queen Guinevere secret.

So when Sir Lancelot was alit, he asked where the queen was. So Dame Brusen said she was in her bed.

And then people were avoided, and Sir Lancelot was led into her chamber. And then Dame Brusen brought Sir Lancelot a cup of wine, and anon as he had drunken that wine he was so assotted and mad that he might make no delay, but withouten any let he went to bed; and he weened that maiden Elaine had been Queen Guinevere. And wit you well that Sir Lancelot was glad, and so was that lady Elaine that she had gotten Sir Lancelot in her arms, for well she knew that that same night should be begotten Sir Galahad upon her that should prove the best knight of the world.”

And so they lay together until undern of the morn; and all the windows and holes of that chamber were stopped that no manner of day might be seen. And anon Sir Lancelot remembered him, and arose up and

went to the window, and anon as he had unshut the window the enchantment was past. Then he knew himself that he had done amiss.

'Alas,' he said, 'that I have lived so long, for now am I shamed.'

And anon he gat his sword in his hand and said:

'Thou traitoress, what art thou that I have lain by all this night? Thou shalt die right here of my hands!'

Then this fair lady Elaine skipped out of her bed all naked, and said,

'Fair courteous knight, Sir Lancelot,' kneeling before him, 'ye are come of king's blood, and therefore I require you have mercy upon me. And as thou art renowned the most noble knight of the world, slay me not, for I have in my womb begotten of thee that shall be the most noblest knight of the world.'

'Ah, false traitoress,' said Sir Lancelot, 'why hast thou betrayed me? Tell me anon,' said Sir Lancelot, 'what thou art.'

'Sir,' she said, 'I am Elaine, the daughter of King Pelles.'

'Well,' said Sir Lancelot, 'I will forgive you.'

And therewith he took her up in his arms and kissed her, for she was a fair lady, and thereto lusty and young, and wise as any was that time living.

'So God me help,' said Sir Lancelot, 'I may not wit [this to] you; but her that made this enchantment upon me and between you and me, an I may find her, that same lady Dame Brusen, shall lose her head for her witchcrafts, for there was never knight deceived as I am this night.'

And then she said, 'My lord, Sir Lancelot, I beseech you, see me as soon as ye may, for I have obeyed me unto the prophecy that my father told me. And by his commandment, to fulfil this prophecy I have given thee the greatest riches and the fairest flower that ever I had, and that is my maidenhood that I shall never have again. And therefore, gentle knight, owe me your goodwill.'

And so Sir Lancelot arrayed him and armed him, and took his leave mildly at that young lady Elaine. And so he departed and rode to the castle of Corbin, where her father was.

And as fast as her time came she was delivered of a fair child, and they christened him Galahad. And wit ye well that child was well kept and well nourished, and he was named Galahad by cause Sir Lancelot was so named at the fountain stone; and after that the Lady of the Lake confirmed him Sir Lancelot du Lake.

Then after the lady was delivered and churched there came a knight unto her, his name was Sir Bromell la Pleche, the which was a great lord. And he had loved that lady long, and he evermore desired to wed her. And so by no mean she could put him off, till on a day she said to

Sir Bromell; 'Wit you well, sir knight, I will not love you, for my love is set upon the best knight of the world.'

'Who is that?' said Sir Bromell.

'Sir,' she said, 'it is Sir Lancelot du Lake that I love and none other, and therefore woo ye me no longer.'

'Ye say well,' said Sir Bromell, 'and sithen ye have told me so much, ye shall have little joy of Sir Lancelot, for I shall slay him wheresomever I meet him.'

'Sir,' said the Lady Elaine, 'do to him no treason, and God forbid that ye spare him.'

'Well, my lady,' said Sir Bromell, 'and I shall promise you this twelvemonth and a day I shall keep Le Pont [de] Corbin for Sir Lancelot's sake, that he shall nother come nother go unto you, but I shall meet with him.'

Then as it fell by fortune and adventure, Sir Bors de Ganis, that was nephew unto Sir Lancelot, came over that bridge; and there Sir Bromell and Sir Bors jousted, and Sir Bors smote Sir Bromell such a buffet that he bare him over his horse's croup.

And then Sir Bromell as an hardy man, pulled out his sword and dressed his shield to do battle with Sir Bors. And anon Sir Bors alit and voided his horse, and there they dashed together many sad strokes. And long thus they fought, and at the last Sir Bromell was laid to the earth, and there Sir Bors began to unlace his helm to slay him. Then Sir Bromell cried him mercy, and yielded him.

'Upon this covenant thou shalt have thy life,' said Sir Bors, 'so thou go unto my lord Sir Lancelot upon Whitsunday next coming, and yield thee unto him as a knight recreant.'

'Sir, I will do it,' said Sir Bromell.

And so he sware upon the cross of the sword, and so he let him depart. And Sir Bors rode unto King Pelles, that was within Corbin, and when the king and Elaine his daughter knew that Sir Bors was nephew unto Sir Lancelot, they made him great cheer. Then said Dame Elaine,

'We marvel where Sir Lancelot is, for he came never here but once that ever I saw.'

'Madam, marvel ye not,' said Sir Bors, 'for this half year he hath been in prison with Queen Morgan le Fay, King Arthur's sister.'

'Alas,' said Dame Elaine, 'that me sore repenteth!'

And ever Sir Bors beheld that child in her arms, and ever him seemed it was passing like Sir Lancelot.

'Truly,' said Dame Elaine, 'wit you well, this child he begat upon me.'

Then Sir Bors wept for joy, and there he prayed to God it might prove as good a knight as his father was.

And so there came in a white dove, and she bare a little censer of gold in her mouth, and there was all manner of meats and drinks. And a maiden bare that Sangreal, and she said there openly,

'Wit you well, Sir Bors, that this child, Sir Galahad, shall sit in the Siege Perilous, and achieve the Sangreal, and he shall be much better than ever was his father Sir Lancelot, that is his own father.'

And then they kneeled adown and made their devotions, and there was such a savour as all the spicery in the world had been there. And as the dove had taken her flight, the maiden vanished with the Sangreal as she came.

'Sir,' said Sir Bors then unto King Pelles, 'this castle may be named the Castle Adventurous, for here be many strange adventures.'

'That is sooth,' said the king, 'for well may this place be called the adventures place. For there come but few knights here that goeth away with any worship; be he never so strong, here he may be proved. And but late ago Sir Gawayne, the good knight, gat little worship here. For I let you wit,' said King Pelles, 'here shall no knight win worship but if he be of worship himself and of good living, and that loveth God and dreadeth God. And else he getteth no worship here, be he never so hardy a man.'

'That is a wonder thing,' said Sir Bors, 'what ye mean in this country, for ye have many strange adventures. And therefore will I lie in this castle this night.'

'Sir, ye shall not do so,' said King Pelles, 'by my counsel, for it is hard an ye escape without a shame.'

'Sir, I shall take the adventure that will fall,' said Sir Bors.

'Then I counsel you,' said the king, 'to be clean confessed.'

'As for that,' said Sir Bors, 'I will be shriven with a good will.'

So Sir Bors was confessed. And for all women Sir Bors was a virgin, save for one, that was the daughter of King Brandegoris, and on her he gat a child that hight Elaine, and save for her Sir Bors was a clean maiden.

And so Sir Bors was led unto bed in a fair large chamber, and many doors were shut about the chamber. When Sir Bors espied all those doors, he avoided all the people, for he might have nobody with him. But in no wise Sir Bors would unarm him, but so he laid him down upon the bed.

And right so he saw a light come, that he might well see a spear great and long that came straight upon him pointling, and Sir Bors seemed that the head of the spear brent like a taper.

And anon or Sir Bors wist, the spear smote him in the shoulder an handbreadth in deepness, and that wound grieved Sir Bors passing sore, and then he laid him down for pain.

And anon therewithal came a knight armed with his shield on his shoulder and his sword in his hand, and he bade Sir Bors, 'Arise, sir knight, and fight with me.'

'I am sore hurt, but yet I shall not fail thee.'

And then Sir Bors started up and dressed his shield; and then they lashed together mightily a great while; and at the last Sir Bors bare him backward till that he came to a chamber door, and there that knight yode into that chamber and rested him a great while. And when he had reposed him he came out fiercely again, and began new battle with Sir Bors mightily and strongly. Then Sir Bors thought he should no more go into that chamber to rest him, and so Sir Bors dressed him betwixt the knight and the chamber door. And there Sir Bors smote him down, and then that knight yielded him.

'What is your name?' said Sir Bors. 'Sir, my name is Sir Bevidere of the Strait Marches.' So Sir Bors made him to swear at Whitsunday next coming to come to the court of King Arthur, 'and yield you there as prisoner and as an overcome knight by the hands of Sir Bors.'

So thus departed Sir Bedivere of the Strait Marches. And then Sir Bors laid him down to rest. And anon he heard much noise in that chamber; and then Sir Bors espied that there came in, he wist not whether at doors or at windows, shot of arrows and of quarrels so thick that he marvelled, and many fell upon him and hurt him in the bare places.

And then Sir Bors was ware where came in an hideous lion. So Sir Bors dressed him to that lion, and anon the lion bereft him his shield, and with his sword Sir Bors smote off the lion's head.

Right so forthwithal he saw a dragon in the court passing perilous and horrible, and there seemed to him that there were letters of gold written in his forehead; and Sir Bors thought that the letters made a signification of 'King Arthur.' And right so there came an horrible leopard and an old, and there they fought long, and did great battle together. And at the last the dragon spit out of his mouth as it had been an hundred dragons; and lightly all the small dragons slew the old dragon and tore him all to pieces.

And anon forthwithal there came an old man into the hall, and he sat him down in a fair chair, and there seemed to be two adders about his neck. And then the old man had an harp, and there he sang an old song of Joseph of Arimathea how he came into this land. And when he had

sung, this old man bade Sir Bors go from thence. 'For here shall ye have no more adventures; yet full worshipfully have ye achieved this, and better shall ye do hereafter.'

And then Sir Bors seemed that there came the whitest dove that ever he saw with a little golden censer in her mouth. And anon therewithal the tempest ceased and passed away, that afore was marvellous to hear. So was all that court full of good savours.

Then Sir Bors saw four fair children bearing four fair tapers, and an old man in the midst of this children with a censer in his hand, and a spear in his other hand, and that spear was called the Spear of Vengeance.

'Now,' said that old man to Sir Bors, 'go ye to your cousin, Sir Lancelot, and tell him this adventure had been most convenient for him of all earthly knights; but sin is so foul in him he may not achieve none such holy deeds, for had not been his sin he had passed all the knights that ever were in his days. And tell thou Sir Lancelot, of all worldly adventures he passeth in manhood and prowess all other, but in this spiritual matters he shall have many his better.'

And then Sir Bors saw four gentlewomen come by him, poorly bisene: and he saw where that they entered into a chamber where was great light as it were a summer's light. And the women kneeled down before an altar of silver with four pillars, as it had been a bishop which kneeled afore the table of silver. And as Sir Bors looked over his head he saw a sword like silver naked hoving over his head, and the clearness thereof smote in his eyen that as at that time Sir Bors was blind.

And there he heard a voice which said, 'Go hence, thou Sir Bors, for as yet thou art not worthy for to be in this place.' And then he yode backward till his bed till on the morn.

And so on the morn King Pelles made great joy of Sir Bors; and then he departed and rode unto Camelot. And there he found Sir Lancelot, and told him of the adventures that he had seen with King Pelles at Corbin.

And so the noise sprang in King Arthur's [court] that Sir Lancelot had gotten a child upon Elaine, the daughter of King Pelles, wherefore Queen Guinevere was wroth, and gave she many rebukes to Sir Lancelot and called him false knight. And then Sir Lancelot told the queen all, and how he was made to lie by her 'in the likeness of you, my lady the Queen;' and so the queen held Sir Lancelot excused.

And as the book saith, King Arthur had been in France, and had warred upon the mighty King Claudas, and had won much of his

lands. And when the king was come again he let cry a great feast, that all lords and ladies of all England should be there, but if it were such as were rebellious against him.

And when Dame Elaine, the daughter of King Pelles, heard of this feast she yode to her father and required him that he would give her leave to ride to that feast. The King answered and said,

‘I will that ye go thither. But in any wise as ye love me and will have my blessing, look that ye be well bisene in the most richest wise; and look that ye spare not for no cost. Ask and ye shall have all that needeth unto you.’

Then by the advice of Dame Brusen, her maiden, all thing was apparelled unto the purpose, that there was never no lady richlier bisene. So she rode with twenty knights, and ten ladies and gentlewomen, to the number of an hundred horse. And when she came to Camelot, King Arthur and Queen Guinevere said, with all the knights that Dame Elaine was the fairest and the best bisene lady that ever was seen in that court.

And anon as King Arthur wist that she was come he met her and saluted her, and so did the most party of all the knights of the Round Table, both Sir Tristram, Sir Bleoberis, and Sir Gawayne, and many more that I will not rehearse.

But when Sir Lancelot saw her he was so ashamed, [and] that by cause he drew his sword to her on the morn after that he had lain by her, that he would not salute her nother speak with her. And yet Sir Lancelot thought that she was the fairest woman that ever he saw in his life-days.

But when Dame Elaine saw Sir Lancelot would not speak unto her she was so heavy she weened her heart would have to-brast, for wit you well, out of measure she loved him. And then Dame Elaine said unto her woman, Dame Brusen,

‘The unkindness of Sir Lancelot slayeth mine heart near!’

‘Ah, peace, madam,’ said Dame Brusen, ‘I shall undertake that this night he shall lie with you, an ye will hold you still.’

‘That were me lever,’ said Dame Elaine, ‘than all the gold that is aboven earth.’

‘Let me deal,’ said Dame Brusen.

So when Dame Elaine was brought unto the Queen either made other good cheer as by countenance, but nothing with their hearts. But all men and women spake of the beauty of Dame Elaine.

And then it was ordained that Dame Elaine should sleep in a chamber

nigh by the Queen, and all under one roof. And so it was done as the king commanded. Then the queen sent for Sir Lancelot and bad him come to her chamber that night. 'Other else,' said the queen, 'I am sure that ye will go to your lady's bed, Dame Elaine, by whom ye gat Galahad.'

'Ah, madam!' said Sir Lancelot, 'never say ye so, for that I did was against my will.'

'Then,' said the queen, 'look that ye come to me when I send for you.'

'Madam,' said Sir Lancelot, 'I shall not fail you, but I shall be ready at your commandment.'

So this bargain was soon not so done and made between them, but Dame Brusen knew it by her crafts, and told it unto her lady, Dame Elaine.

'Alas,' said she, 'how shall I do?'

'Let me deal,' said Dame Brusen, 'for I shall bring him by the hand even to your bed, and he shall ween that I am Queen Guinevere's messenger.'

'Well were me,' said Dame Elaine, 'for all the world I love not so much as I do Sir Lancelot.'

So when time came that folks were to bed, Dame Brusen came to Sir Lancelot's bed's side and said,

'Sir Lancelot du Lake, sleep ye? My lady, Queen Guinevere, lieth and awaiteth upon you.'

'Ah, my fair lady,' said Sir Lancelot, 'I am ready to go with you whother ye will have me.'

So Sir Lancelot threw upon him a long gown, and so he took his sword in his hand. And then Dame Brusen took him by the finger and led him to her lady's bed, Dame Elaine; and then she departed and left them there in bed together. And wit you well this lady was glad, and so was Sir Lancelot, for he weened that he had had another in his arms.

Now leave we them kissing and clipping, as was kindly thing, and now speak we of Queen Guinevere that sent one of her women that she most trusted unto Sir Lancelot's bed. And when she came there she found the bed cold, and he was not therein; and so she came to the queen and told her all.

'Alas,' said the queen, 'where is that false knight become?'

So the queen was nigh out of her wit, and then she writhed and weltered as a mad woman, and might not sleep a four or a five hours.

Then Sir Lancelot had a condition that he used of custom, to clatter in his sleep, and speak often of his lady, Queen Guinevere. So Sir Lancelot had awaked as long as it had pleased him, and so of course by

kind he slept, and Dame Elaine both. And in his sleep he talked and clattered as a jay, of the love that had been betwixt Queen Guinevere and him, and so as he talked so loud the queen heard him there as she lay in her chamber. And when she heard him so clatter she was wroth out of measure, and for anger and pain wist not what to do. And then she coughed so loud that Sir Lancelot awaked. And anon he knew her hemming. And then he knew well that he lay by Elaine; and therewith he leapt out of his bed as he had been a wood man, in his shirt, and anon the queen met him in the floor; and thus she said:

‘Ah, thou false traitor knight! Look thou never abide in my court, and lightly that thou avoid my chamber! and not so hardy, thou false traitor knight, that ever more thou come in my sight!’

‘Alas,’ said Sir Lancelot. And therewith he took such an hearty sorrow at her words that he fell down to the floor in a swoon. And therewithal Queen Guinevere departed.

And when Sir Lancelot awoke out of his swoon, he leapt out at a bay window into the garden, and there with thorns he was all to-scratched of his visage and his body; and so he ran forth he knew not whither, and was as wild [wood] as ever was man. And so he ran two year, and never man had grace to know him.

Now turn we unto Queen Guinevere and to the fair lady Elaine, that when Dame Elaine heard the queen so rebuke Sir Lancelot, and how also he swooned, and how he leaped out at the bay window, then she said unto Queen Guinevere,

‘Madam, ye are greatly to blame for Sir Lancelot, for now have ye lost him, for I saw and heard by his countenance that he is mad for ever. And therefore alas, madam, ye have done great sin, and yourself great dishonour, for ye have a lord royal of your own, and therefore it were your part to love him; for there is no queen in this world that hath such another king as ye have. And if ye were not I might have gotten the love of my lord Sir Lancelot; and great cause I have to love him for he had my maidenhood, and by him I have borne a fair son, whose [name] is Sir Galahad. And he shall be in his time the best knight of the world.’

‘Well, Dame Elaine,’ said the queen, ‘as soon as it is daylight I charge you to avoid my court. And for the love you owe unto Sir Lancelot discover not his counsel, for an ye do, it will be his death.’

‘As for that,’ said Dame Elaine, ‘I dare undertake he is marred for ever, and that have you made. For nother ye nor I are like to rejoice him, for he made the most piteous groans when he leapt out at yonder bay

window that ever I heard man make.' 'Alas,' said fair Elaine, and 'alas,' said the queen, 'for now I wot well that we have lost him for ever!'

So on the morn Dame Elaine took her leave to depart, and would no longer abide. Then King Arthur brought her on her way with more than an hundred knights throughout a forest. And by the way she told Sir Bors de Ganis all how it betid that same night, and how Sir Lancelot leapt out at a window araged out of his wit.

'Alas,' then said Sir Bors, 'where is my lord Sir Lancelot become?'

'Sir,' said Dame Elaine, 'I wot nere.'

'Now, alas,' said Sir Bors, 'betwixt you both ye have destroyed a good knight.'

'As for me, sir,' said Dame Elaine, 'I said never nother did thing that should in any wise displease him, but with the rebuke that Queen Guinevere gave him I saw him swoon to the earth. And when he awoke he took [his sword in] his hand, naked save his shirt, and leapt out at a window with the grisliest groan that ever I heard man make.'

'Now farewell,' said [Sir Bors] unto [Dame Elaine], 'and hold my lord King Arthur with a tale as long as ye can, for I will turn again unto Queen Guinevere and give her an hete. And I require you, as ever ye will have my service, make good watch and espy if ever it may happen you to see my lord Sir Lancelot.'

'Truly,' said Dame Elaine, 'I shall do all that I may do, for I would lose my life for him rather than he should be hurt.'

'Madam,' said Dame Brusen, 'let Sir Bors depart, and hie him as fast as he may to seek Sir Lancelot, for I warn you he is clean out of his mind; and yet he shall be well holpen an but by miracle.'

Then wept Dame Elaine, and so did Sir Bors de Ganis; and so they departed. And Sir Bors rode straight unto Queen Guinevere. And when she saw Sir Bors she wept as she were wood.

'Now, fie on your weeping,' said Sir Bors de Ganis. 'For ye weep never but when there is no boot.'

'Alas,' said Sir Bors, 'that ever Sir Lancelot or any of his blood ever saw you, for now have ye lost the best knight of our blood, and he that was all our leader and our succour. And I dare say and make it good that all kings, christened nother heathen, may not find such a knight, for to speak of his nobleness and courtesy, with his beauty and his gentleness.'

And now speak we of Sir Lancelot that suffered and endured many sharp showers, that ever ran wild wood from place to place, and lived by fruit and such as he might get, and drank water two year.

And other clothing had he but little but in his shirt and his breke. Thus as Sir Lancelot wandered here and there he came into a fair meadow where he found a pavilion. And thereby upon a tree hung a white shield, and two swords hung thereby, and two spears leaned thereby to a tree. And when Sir Lancelot saw the swords, anon he leapt to one sword, and clenched that sword in his hand, and drew it out. And then he lashed at the shield, that all the meadow rang of the dints, that he gave such a noise as ten knights had fought together.

Then came forth a dwarf, and leapt unto Sir Lancelot, and would have had the sword out of his hand. And then Sir Lancelot took him by the both shoulders and threw him unto the ground that he fell upon his neck, and had nigh broken it. And therewithal the dwarf cried help.

Then there came forth a likely knight, and well apparelled in scarlet furred with miniver. And anon as he saw Sir Lancelot he deemed that he should be out of his wit, and then he said with fair speech,

‘Good man, lay down that sword! For as meseemeth thou hadst more need of a sleep and of warm clothes than to wield that sword.’

‘As for that,’ said Sir Lancelot, ‘come not too nigh, for an thou do, wit thou well I will slay thee.’

And when the knight of the pavilion saw that, he start backward into his pavilion. And then the dwarf armed him lightly, and so the knight thought by force and might to have taken the sword from Sir Lancelot. And so he came stepping upon him; and when Sir Lancelot saw him come so armed with his sword in his hand, then Sir Lancelot flew to him with such a might, and smote him upon the helm such a buffet, that the stroke troubled his brain, and therewithal the sword brake in three. And the knight fell to the earth and seemed as he had been dead, the blood brasting out of his mouth, nose, and ears.

And then Sir Lancelot ran into the pavilion, and rushed even into the warm bed. And there was a lady that lay in that bed, and anon she gat her smock and ran out of the pavilion, and when she saw her lord lie at the ground like to be dead, then she cried and wept as she had been mad. And so with her noise the knight awaked out of his sowgh, and looked up weakly with his eyen.

And then he asked where was that mad man that had given him such a buffet, ‘For such a one had I never of man’s hand.’

‘Sir,’ said the dwarf, ‘it is not worship to hurt him, for he is a man out of his wit, and doubt ye not he hath been a man of great worship, and for some heartly sorrow that he hath taken, he is fallen mad. And meseemeth,’ said the dwarf, ‘that he resembleth much unto Sir Lancelot, for him I saw at the tournament of Lonezep.’

'Jesu defend,' said that knight, 'that ever that noble knight, Sir Lancelot, should be in such a plight! But whatsomever he be,' said the knight, 'harm will I none do him.'

And this knight's name was Sir Blyaunt, the which said unto the dwarf, 'Go thou fast on horseback unto my brother Sir Selyvaunt, which is at the Castle Blank, and tell him of mine adventure, and bid him bring with him an horse litter, and then will we bear this knight unto my castle.'

So the dwarf rode fast, and then he came again and brought Sir Selyvaunt with him, and six men with an horse litter. And so they took up the feather bed with Sir Lancelot, and so carried all away with them unto the Castle Blank, and he never awaked till he was within the castle. And then they bound his hands and his feet, and gave him good meats and good drinks, and brought him again to his strength and his fairness. But in his wit they could not bring him nother to know himself. Thus was Sir Lancelot there more than a year and an half, honestly arrayed and fair farn withal.

Then upon a day this lord of that castle, Sir Blyaunt, took his arms on horseback with a spear, to seek adventures. And as he rode in a forest there met him two knights adventurous, the one was Breuse Saunce Pité, and his brother, Sir Bartelot. And these two ran both at once on Sir Blyaunt, and brake their spears upon his body. And then they drew their swords and made great battle, and fought long together. But at the last Sir Blyaunt was sore wounded, and felt himself faint, and anon he fled on horseback toward his castle.

And as they came hurling under the castle there Sir Lancelot at a window, and saw how two knights laid upon Sir Blyaunt with their swords. And when Sir Lancelot saw that, yet as wood as he was he was sorry for his lord, Sir Blyaunt. And then in a brayde Sir Lancelot brake his chains off his legs and off his arms, and in the breaking he hurt his hands sore; and so Sir Lancelot ran out at a postern, and there he met with those two knights that chased Sir Blyaunt. And there he pulled down Sir Bartelot with his bare hands from his horse, and therewithal he wroth out the sword out of his hand; and so he leapt unto Sir Breuse, and gave him such a buffet upon the head that he tumbled backward over his horse's croup.

And when Sir Bartelot saw his brother have such a buffet he gat a spear in his hand, and would have run Sir Lancelot through. And that saw Sir Blyaunt, and struck off the hand of Sir Bartelot. And then Sir Breuse and Sir Bartelot gat their horses and fled away as fast as they might.

So when Sir Selyvaunt came and saw what Sir Lancelot had done

for his brother, then he thanked God, and so did his brother, that ever they did him any good. But when Sir Blyaunt saw that Sir Lancelot was hurt with the breaking of his irons, then was he heavy that ever he bound him.

'I pray you, brother, Sir Selyvaunt, bind him no more, for he is happy and gracious.' Then they made great joy of Sir Lancelot, and so he abode thereafter an half year and more.

And so on a morn Sir Lancelot was ware where came a great boar with many hounds after him. But the boar was so big there might no hounds tear him. And so the hunters came after, blowing their horns, both upon horseback and some upon foot; and then Sir Lancelot was ware where one alit and tied his horse till a tree, and leaned his spear against the tree.

So there came Sir Lancelot and found the horse and a good sword tied to the saddle-bow; and anon Sir Lancelot leapt into the saddle and gat that spear in his hand, and then he rode fast after the boar.

And anon he was ware where he sat, and his arse to a rock, fast by an hermitage. And then Sir Lancelot ran at the boar with his spear, and all to-shivered his spear, and therewith the boar turned him lightly, and rove out the lungs and the heart of the horse, that Sir Lancelot fell to the earth; and, or ever he might get from the horse, the boar smote him on the brawn of the thigh up unto the hough bone. And then Sir Lancelot was wroth, and up he gat upon his feet, and took his sword, and smote off the boar's head at one stroke.

And therewithal came out the hermit, and saw him have such a wound. Anon he meaned him, and would have had him home unto his hermitage. But when Sir Lancelot heard him speak, he was so wroth with his wound that he ran upon the hermit to have slain him. Then the hermit ran away, and when Sir Lancelot might not overget him, he threw his sword after him, for he might no further for bleeding. Then the hermit turned again, and asked Sir Lancelot how he was hurt.

'Ah, my fellow,' said Sir Lancelot, 'this boar hath bitten me sore.'

'Then come ye with me,' said the hermit, 'and I shall heal you.'

'Go thy way,' said Sir Lancelot, 'and deal not with me!'

Then the hermit ran his way, and there he met with a goodly knight with many men.

'Sir,' said the hermit, 'here is fast by my place the goodliest man that I ever saw, and he is sore wounded with a boar, and yet he hath slain the boar. But well I wot,' said the good man, 'an he be not holpen, he shall die of that wound, and that were great pity.'

Then that knight at the desire of the hermit gat a cart, and therein he put the boar and Sir Lancelot, for he was so feeble that they might right easily deal with him. And so Sir Lancelot was brought unto the hermitage, and there the hermit healed him of his wound. But the hermit might not find him his sustenance, so he impaired and waxed feeble, both of body and of his wit: for the default of sustenance he waxed more wooder than he was aforetime.

And then upon a day Sir Lancelot ran his way into the forest, and by the adventure he came to the city of Corbin, where Dame Elaine was, that bare Galahad, Sir Lancelot's son. And when he was entered into the town he ran through the town to the castle and then all the young men of that city ran after Sir Lancelot, and there they threw turves at him, and give him many sad strokes. And ever as Sir Lancelot might reach any of them, he threw them so that they would never come in his hands no more; for of some he brake the legs and arms.

And so he fled into the castle; and then came out knights and squires and rescued Sir Lancelot. When they beheld him and looked upon his person, they thought they saw never so goodly a man. And when they saw so many wounds upon him, they deemed that he had been a man of worship. And then they ordained him clothes to his body, and straw and litter under the gate of the castle to lie in. And so every day they would throw him meat, and set him drink, but there was but few that would bring him meat to his hands.

So it befell that King Pelles had a nephew, whose name was Castor; and so he desired of the king to be made knight, and at his own request the king made him knight at the feast of Candlemas. And when Sir Castor was made knight, that same day he gave many gowns. And then Sir Castor sent for the fool, which was Sir Lancelot. And when he came afore Sir Castor, he gave Sir Lancelot a robe of scarlet and all that longed unto him. And when Sir Lancelot was so arrayed like a knight, he was the seemliest man in all the court, and none so well made.

So when he saw his time he went into the garden, and there he laid him down by a well and slept. And so at after noon Dame Elaine and her maidens came into the garden to sport them. And as they roamed up and down one of Dame Elaine's maidens espied where a goodly man lay by the well sleeping.

'Peace,' said Dame Elaine, 'and say no word, but show me that man where he lieth.'

So anon she brought Dame Elaine where he lay. And when that she

beheld him, anon she fell in remembrance of him, and knew him verily for Sir Lancelot. And therewithal she fell on weeping so heartily that she sank even to the earth. And when she had thus wept a great while, then she arose and called her maidens and said she was sick. And so she yode out of the garden, as straight to her father as she could, and there she took him by herself apart; and then she said,

‘Ah, my dear father, now I have need of your help, and but if that ye help me now farewell my good days for ever.’

‘What is that, daughter?’ said King Pelles.

‘In your garden I was to sport me, and there by the well I found Sir Lancelot du Lake sleeping.’

‘I may not believe it,’ said King Pelles.

‘Truly, sir, he is there,’ she said, ‘and mescemeth he should be yet distract out of his wit.’

‘Then hold you still,’ said the king, ‘and let me deal.’

Then the king called unto him such as he most trusted, a four persons, and Dame Elaine, his daughter, and Dame Brusen her servant. And when they came to the well and beheld Sir Lancelot, anon Dame Brusen said to the king,

‘We must be wise how we deal with him, for this knight is out of his mind, and if we awake him rudely what he will do we all know not. And therefore abide ye awhile and I shall throw an enchantment upon him that he shall not awake of an hour.’

And so she did, and then the king commanded that all people should avoid that none should be in that way there as the king would come. And so when this was done, these four men and these ladies laid hand on Sir Lancelot, and so they bare him into a tower, and so into a chamber where was the holy vessel of the Sangreal. And before that holy vessel Sir Lancelot was laid. And there came an holy man and unhylled that vessel, and so by miracle and by virtue of that holy vessel Sir Lancelot was healed and recovered.

And as soon as he was awaked he groaned and sighed, and complained him sore of his woodness and strokes that he had had. And as soon as Sir Lancelot saw King Pelles and Dame Elaine, he waxed ashamed and said thus,

‘Ah Lord Jesu, how came I hither? For God’s sake, my fair lord, let me wit how that I came hither!’

‘Sir,’ said Dame Elaine, ‘into this country ye came like a mazed man, clean out of your wit. And here have ye been kept as a fool, and no creature here knew what ye were, until by fortune a maiden of mine brought me unto you whereas ye lay sleeping by a well. And anon as I

verily beheld you [I knew you]. Then I told my father, and so were ye brought afore this holy vessel, and by the virtue of it thus were ye healed.'

'Ah Jesu, mercy!' said Sir Lancelot. 'If this be sooth, how many be there that knoweth of my woodness?'

'So God me help,' said Dame Elaine, 'no more but my father, and I, and Dame Brusen.'

'Now for Christ's love,' said Sir Lancelot, 'keep it counsel, and let no man know it in the world. For I am sore ashamed that I have been misfortuned, for I am banished the country of England.'

And so Sir Lancelot lay more than a fortnight or ever that he might stir for soreness. And then upon a day he said unto Dame Elaine these words,

'Fair Lady Elaine, for your sake I have had much care and anguish, it needeth not to rehearse it, ye know how. Notwithstanding I know well I have done foul to you when that I drew my sword to you, to have slain you, upon the morn after when that I had lain with you. And all was for the cause that ye and Dame Brusen made me for to lie by you maugre mine head. And as ye say, Sir Galahad your son was begotten.'

'That is truth,' said Dame Elaine.

'Then will ye for my sake,' said Sir Lancelot, 'go ye unto your father and get me a place of him wherein I may dwell? For in the court of King Arthur may I never come.'

'Sir,' said Dame Elaine, 'I will live and die with you, only for your sake; and if my life might not avail you and my death might avail you, wit you well I would die for your sake. And I will to my father, and I am right sure there is nothing that I can desire of him but I shall have it. And where ye be, my lord Sir Lancelot, doubt ye not but I will be with you with all the service that I may do.'

So forthwithal she went to her father and said,

'Sir, my lord Sir Lancelot desireth to be here by you in some castle of yours.'

'Well, daughter,' said the king, 'sith it is his desire to abide in these marches he shall be in the Castle of Blyaunt, and there shall ye be with him, and twenty of the fairest young ladies that been in the country, and they shall be all of the greatest blood in this country, and ye shall have twenty knights with you. For, daughter, I will that ye wit we all be honoured by the blood of Sir Lancelot.'

Then went Dame Elaine unto Sir Lancelot, and told him all how her father had devised. Then came a knight which was called Sir Castor,

that was nephew unto King Pelles, and he came unto Sir Lancelot, and asked him what was his name.

‘Sir,’ said Sir Lancelot, ‘my name is Le Chevalier Mal Fet, that is to say “the knight that hath trespassed”.’

‘Sir,’ said Sir Castor, ‘it may well be so, but ever meseemeth your name should be Sir Lancelot du Lake, for or now I have seen you.’

‘Sir,’ said Lancelot, ‘ye are not gentle, for I put a case my name were Sir Lancelot, and that it list me not to discover my name, what should it grieve you here to keep my counsel, and ye not hurt thereby? But wit you well, an ever it lie in my power I shall grieve you, an ever I meet with you in my way!’

Then Sir Castor kneeled adown and besought Sir Lancelot of mercy: ‘for I shall never utter what ye be while that ye are in these parts.’ Then Sir Lancelot pardoned him. And so King Pelles with twenty knights, and Dame Elaine with her twenty ladies, rode unto the Castle of Blyaunt that stood in an island beclosed environ, with a fair water deep and large. And when they were there Sir Lancelot let call it the Joyous Isle; and there was he called none otherwise but Le Chevalier Mal Fet, ‘the knight that hath trespassed’.

Then Sir Lancelot let make him a shield all of sable, and a queen crowned in the midst, of silver, and a knight clene armed kneeling afore her. And every day once, for any mirths that all the ladies might make him, he would once every day look toward the realm of Logres, where King Arthur and Queen Guinevere was. And then would he fall upon a-weeping as his heart should to-brast.

So it fell that time Sir Lancelot heard of a jousting fast by within three leagues. Then he called unto him a dwarf, and he bad him go unto that jousting: ‘And or ever the knights depart, look thou make there a cry, in hearing of all knights, that there is one knight in Joyous Isle, which is the Castle of Blyaunt, and say his name is Le Chevalier Mal Fet, that will joust against knights all that will come. And who that putteth that knight to the worse he shall have a fair maiden and a gerfalcon.’

So when this cry was cried, unto Joyous Isle drew the number of five hundred knights. And wit you well there was never seen in King Arthur’s day one knight that did so much deeds of arms as Sir Lancelot did those three days together. For as the book maketh truly mention, he had the better of all the five hundred knights, and there was not one slain of them. And after that Sir Lancelot made them all a great feast.

And in the meanwhile came Sir Percivale de Galis and Sir Ector de

Maris under that castle which was called the Joyous Isle. And as they beheld that gay castle they would have gone to that castle, but they might not for the broad water, and bridge could they find none. Then were they ware on the other side where stood a lady with a sparhawk on her hand, and Sir Percivale called unto her, and asked that lady who was in that castle.

'Fair knights,' she said, 'here within this castle is the fairest lady in this land, and her name is Dame Elaine. Also we have in this castle one of the fairest knights and the mightiest man that is, I dare say, living, and he calleth himself Le Chevalier Mal Fet.'

'How came he into these marches?' said Sir Percivale.

'Truly,' said the damsel, 'he came into this country like a mad man, with dogs and boys chasing him through the city of Corbin, and by the holy vessel of the Sangreal he was brought into his wit again. But he will not do battle with no knight but by undern or by noon. And if ye list to come into the castle,' said the lady, 'ye must ride unto the further side of the castle and there shall ye find a vessel that will bear you and your horse.'

Then they departed, and came unto the vessel. And then Sir Percivale alit, and said unto Sir Ector de Maris: 'Ye shall abide me here until that I wit what manner a knight he is; for it were shame unto us, inas-much as he is but one knight, an we should both do battle with him.'

'Do ye as ye list,' said Sir Ector, 'and here I shall abide you until that I hear of you.'

Then passed Sir Percivale the water, and when he came to the castle gate he said unto the porter,

'Go thou to [the] good knight of this castle, and tell him here is come an errant knight to joust with him.'

Then the porter yode in and came again and bade him ride into the common place thereas the jousting shall be, 'where lords and ladies may behold you.'

And so anon as Sir Lancelot had a warning he was soon ready; and there Sir Percivale and Sir Lancelot were come both. They encountered with such a might, and their spears were so rude, that both the horses and the knights fell to the earth. Then they avoided their horses, and flang out their noble swords, and hewed away many cantels of their shields, and so hurtled together with their shields like two boars, and either wounded other passing sore.

And so at the last Sir Percivale spake first when they had foughten there long more than two hours.

'Now fair knight,' said Sir Percivale, 'I require you of your

kighthood to tell me thy name, for I met never with such another knight.'

'Sir, as for my name,' said Sir Lancelot, 'I will not hide it from you, but my name is Le Chevalier Mal Fet. Now tell me your name,' said Sir Lancelot, 'I require you.'

'Truly,' said Sir Percivale, 'my name is Sir Percivale de Galis, that was brother unto the good knight, Sir Lamorak de Galis, and King Pellinore was our father, and Sir Aglovale is my brother.'

'Alas,' said Sir Lancelot, 'what have I done to fight with you which are a knight of the Table Round, and sometime I was your [fellow].'

And therewithal Sir Lancelot kneeled down upon his knees, and threw away his shield and his sword from him. When Sir Percivale saw him do so he marvelled what he meant. And then he said thus:

'Sir knight, whatsomever ye be, I require you upon the high order of kighthood, to tell me your true name.'

Then he answered and said, 'So God me help, my name is Sir Lancelot du Lake, King Ban's son of Benoy.'

'Alas then,' said Sir Percivale, 'what have I now done? For I was sent by the queen for to seek you, and so I have sought you nigh this two year, and yonder is Sir Ector de Maris, your brother, which abideth me on the yonder side of the water. And therefore, for God's sake,' said Sir Percivale, 'forgive me mine offences that I have here done.'

'Sir, it is soon forgiven,' said Sir Lancelot.

Then Sir Percivale sent for Sir Ector de Maris; and when Sir Lancelot had a sight of him, he ran unto him and took him in his arms; and then Sir Ector kneeled down, and either wept upon other, that all men had pity to behold them.

Then came forth Dame Elaine, and she made them great cheer as might be made; and there she told Sir Ector and Sir Percivale how and in what manner Sir Lancelot came into that country, and how he was healed. And there it was known how long Sir Lancelot was with Sir Blyaunt and with Sir Selyvaunt, and how he first met with them, [and how he] departed from them by cause he was hurt with a boar; and how the hermit healed him of his great wound, and how that he came to the city of Corbin.

So it befell on a day that Sir Ector and Sir Percivale came unto Sir Lancelot and asked of him what he would do, and whether he would go with them unto King Arthur.

'Nay,' said Sir Lancelot, 'that may not do by no mean, for I was so vengeably defended the court that I cast me never to come there more.'

'Sir,' said Sir Ector, 'I am your brother, and ye are the man in the world that I love most. And if I understood that it were your disworship, ye may understand that I would never counsel you thereto. But King Arthur and all his knights, and in especial Queen Guinevere, maketh such dole and sorrow for you that it is marvel to hear and see. And ye must remember the great worship and renown that ye be of, how that ye have been more spoken of than any other knight that is now living; for there is none that beareth the name now but ye and Sir Tristram. And therefore brother,' said Sir Ector, 'make you ready to [ride to] the court with us. And I daresay and make it good,' said Sir Ector, 'it hath cost my lady, the queen, twenty thousand pounds the seeking of you.'

'Well brother,' said Sir Lancelot, 'I will do after your counsel, and ride with you.'

So then they took [their horses] and made ready, and anon they took their leave at King Pelles and at Dame Elaine. And when Sir Lancelot should depart Dame Elaine made great sorrow.

'My lord, Sir Lancelot,' said Dame Elaine, 'this same feast of Pentecost shall your son and mine, Galahad, be made knight, for he is now fully fifteen winter old.'

'Madam, do as ye list,' said Sir Lancelot, 'and God give him grace to prove a good knight.'

'As for that,' said Dame Elaine, 'I doubt not he shall prove the best man of his kin except one.'

'Then shall he be a good man enough,' said Sir Lancelot.

So anon they departed, and within fifteen days' journey they came unto Camelot, that is in English called Winchester. And when Sir Lancelot was come among them, the king and all the knights made great joy of his homecoming.

And there Sir Percivale and Sir Ector de Maris began and told the whole adventures: how Sir Lancelot had been out of his mind in the time of his absence, and how he called himself Le Chevalier Mal Fet, the knight that had trespassed; and in three days within Joyous Isle Sir Lancelot smote down five hundred knights. And ever as Sir Ector and Sir Percivale told these tales of Sir Lancelot, Queen Guinevere wept as she should have died. Then the queen made him great cheer.

'Ah Jesu,' said King Arthur, 'I marvel for what cause ye, Sir Lancelot, went out of your mind. For I and many other deem it was for the love of fair Elaine, the daughter of King Pelles, by whom ye are noised that ye have gotten a child, and his name is Galahad. And men say that he shall do many marvellous things.'

‘My lord,’ said Sir Lancelot, ‘if I did any folly I have that I sought.’

And therewithal the king spake no more. But all Sir Lancelot’s kinsmen knew for whom he went out of his mind. And then there was made great feasts and great joy was there among them, and all lords and ladies made great joy when they heard that Sir Lancelot was come again unto the court.

'Here folloiweth,' in the Winchester manuscript, 'that noble tale of the Sangreal, briefly drawn out of French, which is a tale chronicled for one of the truest and one of the holiest that is in this world': for the Holy Grail was the vessel used by Christ at the Last Supper, and Joseph of Arimathea received His blood in it as He hung on the Cross, and thereafter Joseph brought it into Britain, to Glastonbury, whence it vanished away. Very little of that 'noble tale' is given here, because little of it has any bearing upon the story of Lancelot and his love for Guinevere: and it was in fact Galahad not Lancelot to whom it was vouchsafed to achieve the Quest. The passages which are given have been greatly abridged, but they are in Malory's words.

AT the vigil of Pentecost all the fellowship of the Table Round were come unto Camelot, four hundred winter and four and fifty after the Passion of our Lord Jesu Christ; and on Whitsunday when the king and all the knights were come from service they went unto the court.

In the meanwhile come in a good old man and an ancient, and with him he brought a young knight, and these words he said:

'Peace be with you, fair lords!'

The king said, 'Sir, ye be right welcome, and the young knight with you.'

And anon he lead him to the Siege Perilous where beside sate Sir Lancelot, and the good man lift up the cloth and found there the letters that said thus: This is the Siege of Sir Galahad the Haut Prince. And then he set him down surely in that siege.

Then all the knights of the Table Round marvelled greatly of Sir Galahad that he durst sit there and was so tender of age. All they said, 'This is he by whom the Sangreal shall be enchieved, for there sate never none but he there but he were mischieved.'

Then Sir Lancelot beheld his son and had great joy of him.

So this noise was great in all the court, that it came into the queen. And she had marvel what knight it might be. Then some said that he resembled much unto Sir Lancelot.

'I may well suppose,' said the queen, 'that Sir Lancelot begat him on King Pelles' daughter, which made him to lie by her by enchantment, and his name is Galahad. I would fain see him,' said the queen, 'for he must needs be a noble man, for so his father is that him begat.'

So a lady that stood by the queen said, 'Madam, for God's sake, ought he of right to be so good a knight?'

'Yea, forsooth,' said the queen, 'for he is of all parties comen of the

best knights of the world and of the highest lineage: for Sir Lancelot is come but of the eighth degree from our Lord Jesu Christ.'

Then the king and all the estates went unto evensong to the great minster, and so after to supper, and every knight sat in his own place.

Then anon they heard cracking and crying of thunder, that them thought the palace should all to-drive. So in the midst of the blast entered a sunbeam, more clearer by seven times than ever they saw day, and all they were alighted of the grace of the Holy Ghost.

Then entered into the hall the Holy Grail covered with white samite, but there was none that might see it nother whom that bare it. And there was all the hall fulfilled with good odours, and every knight had such meats and drinks as he best loved in this world.

And when the Holy Grail had been borne thorough the hall, then the holy vessel departed suddenly, that they wist not where it became. Then the king yielded thankings to God of His good grace.

'Now,' said Sir Gawayne, 'one thing beguiled us, that we might not see the Holy Grail; it was so preciousely covered. Wherefore I will make here a vow that to-morn I shall labour in the quest of the Sangreal, and that I shall hold me out a twelvemonth and a day or more if need be.'

So they of the Table Round arose up, the most party, and made such avows as Sir Gawayne hath made. Anon as King Arthur heard this he was greatly displeased, and therewith the tears fell in his eyen, and then he said,

'Sir Gawayne, Gawayne! Ye have set me in great sorrow, for I have great doubt that my true fellowship shall never meet here more again.'

Then after service in the minster they put on their helms, and there was weeping and great sorrow.

Then the queen departed into the chamber, that no man should perceive her great sorrows. Then Sir Lancelot went to her chamber, and she cried aloud and said,

'Ah, Sir Lancelot, Lancelot! Ye have betrayed me and put me to the death, for to leave thus my lord!'

'Ah, madam, I pray you be not displeased, for I shall come again as soon as I may with my worship.'

'Alas,' said she, 'that ever I saw ye! But He that suffered death upon the Cross for all mankind, He be unto you good conduct and safety!'

Right so departed Sir Lancelot, and found his fellowship, and then they took their horses and rode through the streets of Camelot, and there

was weeping of rich and poor. And then every knight took the way that him liked best.

Sir Lancelot rode overthwart and endlong a wild forest. And at the last he come to a stony cross and saw an old chapel. Then he went to the chapel door and found it waste and broken. And within he found a fair altar full richly arrayed with cloth of clean silk, and there stood a clean fair candlestick which bare six great candles therein, and the candlestick was of silver; and when Sir Lancelot saw this light he had great will for to enter into the chapel, but he could find no place where he might enter. Then was he passing heavy and dismayed, and returned again and came to his horse, and did off his saddle and bridle and let him pasture him, and unlaced his helm and ungird his sword and laid him down to sleep upon his shield tofore the cross.

And so he fell on sleep, and half waking and half sleeping he saw coming by him two palfreys, which bare a litter, and therein lying a sick knight. And Sir Lancelot heard him say,

'Ah, sweet Lord! When shall this sorrow leave me and when shall the holy vessel come by me wherethorugh I shall be healed?'

So with that Sir Lancelot saw the candlestick with the six tapers came before the cross, and he saw nobody that brought it. Also there came a table of silver and the holy vessel of the Sangreal. And therewith on his hands and knees the sick knight went so nigh that he touched the holy vessel and kissed it, and anon he was whole. And then he said,

'Lord God, I thank thee, for I am healed of this sickness!'

So the holy vessel went unto the chapel with the chandelier and the light, so that Sir Lancelot wist not where it was become; for he was overtaken with sin, that he had no power to rise against the holy vessel.

Then the sick knight kissed the cross and anon his squire brought him his arms, and when he was clean armed he took there Sir Lancelot's helm and his sword and horse, and so departed they from the cross.

Then anon Sir Lancelot waked, and right so heard a voice that said,

'Sir Lancelot, more harder than is the stone, and more bitter than is the wood, and more naked and barer than is the leaf of the fig-tree! Therefore go thou from hence, and withdraw thee from these holy places!'

And so Sir Lancelot departed sore weeping and cursed the time that he was born, for then he deemed never to have worship more. For those words went to his heart.

Then Sir Lancelot found his helm, his sword and his horse away. And then he called himself a very wretch, and most unhappy of all knights, and there he said,

‘My sin and my wickedness hath brought me unto great dishonour! For when I sought worldly adventures I ever enchieved them and had the better in every place, and never was I discomfit in no quarrel, were it right, were it wrong. And now I take upon me the adventures to seek of holy things, now I see and understand that mine old sin hindreth and shameth me, that I had no power to stir nother speak when the holy blood appeared before me.’

So thus he sorrowed till it was day, and heard the fowlës sing; then somewhat he was comforted.

And so he departed from the cross on foot into a fair forest, and so by prime he came to an high hill and found an hermitage and an hermit therein which was going unto mass. And then Sir Lancelot kneeled down and cried on our Lord mercy for his wicked works.

So when mass was done Sir Lancelot called him and prayed him for saint charity for to hear his life.

‘With a good will,’ said the good man, and asked him whether he was of the fellowship of the Table Round.

‘Yea, forsooth, sir, and my name is Sir Lancelot du Lake that hath been right well said of. And now my good fortune is changed for I am the most wretch of the world.’

‘Sir,’ said the hermit, ‘ye ought to thank God more than any knight living, for He hath caused you to have more worldly worship than any knight that is now living. And for your presumption to take upon you in deadly sin for to be in His presence, where His flesh and His blood was, which caused you ye might not see it with your worldly eyen. He hath given you beauty, bounty, seemliness, and great strength over all other knights. And therefore ye are the more beholden unto God than any other man to love him and dread him, for your strength and your manhood will little avail you an God be against you.’

Then Sir Lancelot wept with heavy heart and said, ‘Now I know well ye say me sooth.’

‘Sir,’ said the good man, ‘hide none old sin from me.’

Then he told there the good man all his life, and how he had loved a queen unmeasurably and out of measure long. ‘And all my great deeds of arms that I have done for the most party was for the queen’s sake, and never did I battle all only for God’s sake, but for to win worship and to cause me the better to be beloved, and little or nought I thanked God for it. Sir, I pray you counsel me.’

‘Sir,’ said the hermit, ‘ye shall ensure me by your knighthood ye shall no more come in that queen’s fellowship as much as ye may forbear.’

And then Sir Lancelot promised him that he nould, by the faith of his body.

'Sir, look that your heart and your mouth accord,' said the good man, and then he joined Sir Lancelot such penance as he might do, and so as-soiled him. And then Sir Lancelot repented him greatly of his misdeeds.

Now saith the tale that when Sir Lancelot was come to the water of Mortayse he found a ship without sail other oar. And there he had the most sweetness that ever he felt and he was fulfilled with all thing that he desired.

And so on a night he heard an horse come, and one riding upon him, and he alight and went into the ship. And Sir Lancelot said, 'Sir, ye be welcome!'

And he salued him again and said, 'Sir, what is your name? For much my heart giveth unto you.'

'Truly,' said he, 'my name is Sir Lancelot du Lake.'

'Sir,' said he, 'then be ye welcome! For ye were the beginner of me in this world.'

'Ah, sir, are ye Sir Galahad?'

'Yea, forsooth.'

And so he kneeled down and asked him his blessing, and no tongue can tell what joy was betwixt them.

So dwelled Sir Lancelot and Galahad within that ship half a year, and served God daily and nightly with all their power. And often they arrived in isles far from folk, where there repaired none but wild beasts, and there they found many strange adventures and perilous.

Then saw they a knight, armed all in white and led in his right hand a white horse. And so he salued the two knights in the High Lord's behalf, and said unto Sir Galahad,

'Sir, ye have been long enow with your father. Therefore come out of the ship and take this horse and go where the adventures shall lead you in the quest of the Sangreal.'

And they heard a voice that said, 'Every of you think to do well, for nevermore shall one see another of you before the dreadful day of doom.'

'Now, my son, Sir Galahad, sith we shall depart and nother of us see other more, I pray to that High Father conserve me and you both.'

'Sir,' said Sir Galahad, 'no prayer availeth so much as yours.'

And therewith Sir Galahad entered into the forest. And the wind arose and drove Sir Lancelot more than a month thorough the sea, where he slept but little, but prayed to God that he might see some tidings of the Sangreal.

So it befell on a night, at midnight, he arrived before a castle, and there was a postern opened toward the sea. Then he armed him and entered into the castle, for he found no gate or door but it was open.

And at last he found a chamber whereof the door was shut, and he enforced him mickle to undo the door. Then he heard a voice which sang so sweetly that it seemed none earthly thing,

‘Joy and honour be to the Father of Heaven.’

Then Sir Lancelot kneeled adown tofore the chamber door, for well wist he that there was the Sangreal. Then said he,

‘Fair sweet Father, Jesu Christ! If ever I did thing that pleased Thee, Lord, for Thy pity ne have me not in despite for my sins done before-time, and that Thou show me something of that I seek.’

And with that he saw the chamber door open, and there came out a great clearness, that the house was as bright as all the torches of the world had been there. So he would have entered. And anon a voice said unto him,

‘Sir Lancelot, flee and enter not, for thou ought not to do it! For an if thou enter thou shalt forthink it.’

Then he withdrew him aback right heavy. Then looked he up into the midst of the chamber and saw a table of silver, and the holy vessel covered with red samite, and many angels about it, whereof one held a candle of wax brenning, and the other held a cross and the ornaments of an altar. And before the holy vessel he saw a good man clothed as a priest, and it seemed that he was at the sacring of the mass. And it seemed to Sir Lancelot that above the priest’s hands were three men, whereof the two put the youngest by likeness between the priest’s hands; and so he lift him up right high.

And then Sir Lancelot thought the priest was so greatly charged that he should fall to the earth. Then came he to the door a great pace and said,

‘Fair Father, Jesu Christ, ne take it for no sin if I help the good man which hath great need of help.’

Right so entered he into the chamber, and when he came nigh he felt a breath that him thought it was entromeddled with fire. And therewith he fell to the earth and had no power to arise, as he had lost the power of his body and his hearing and sight. Then felt he many hands which took him up and bare him out of the chamber door and left him there seeming dead.

So upon the morrow they within were risen and found Sir Lancelot. And so they bare him into a chamber and laid him in a rich bed far from folk. And at the twenty-fifth day befell him after midday that he opened his eyen. And he made great sorrow and said,

'Why have ye awaked me? For I was more at ease than I am now. I have seen great marvels that no tongue may tell, and more than any heart can think. And had not my sin been beforetime, else I had seen much more.'

Then they asked him how it stood with him.

'Forsooth,' said he, 'I am whole of body, thanked be our Lord. Therefore, for God's love, tell me where I am.'

Then said they all that he was in the castle of Carbonek.

'Sir,' said they, 'the quest of the Sangreal is enchieved now right in you, and never shall ye see of Sangreal more than ye have seen.'

'Now I thank God,' said Sir Lancelot, 'for his great mercy of that I have seen, for it sufficeth me.'

Then came word to the King Pelles that the knight that had lain so long dead was Sir Lancelot. Then was the king right glad and went to see him, and the king told him how his fair daughter [Elaine] was dead. Then Sir Lancelot was right heavy and said,

'Me forthinketh of the death of your daughter, for she was a full fair lady, fresh and young. And well I wot she bare the best knight that is now on earth, or that ever was since God was born.'

So Sir Lancelot departed and rode thorough many realms, and at the last he came to Camelot, where he found King Arthur and the queen. But many of the knights of Round Table were slain and destroyed. And all the court were passing glad of Sir Lancelot.

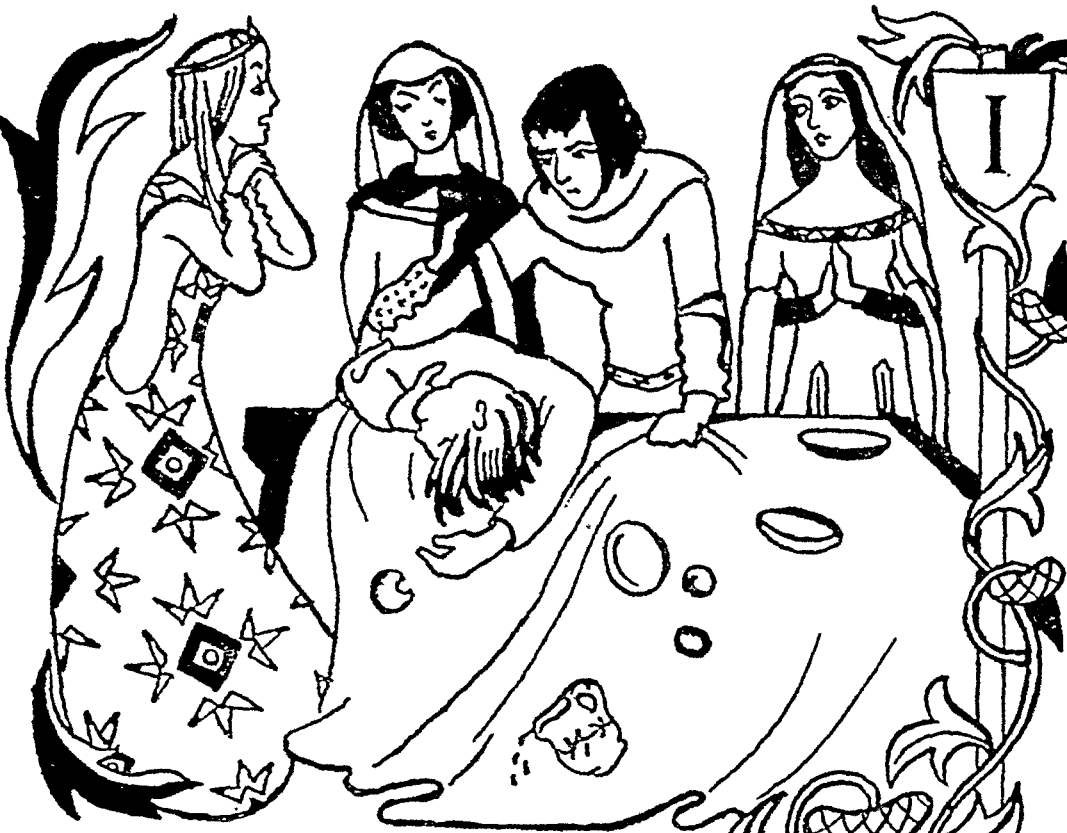
And it befell that Sir Bors come to Camelot, and then was there made great joy of him in all the court. And the king made great clerks to come before him. So when Sir Bors had told him of the high adventures, such as had befall Sir Lancelot, [Sir] Percivale and Sir Galahad and himself, then Sir Lancelot told the adventures of the Sangreal that he had seen. And all this was made in great books and put up in almeries at Salisbury.

And anon Sir Bors said to Sir Lancelot,

'Sir Galahad, your own son, salued you by me, and so did Sir Percivale. For I buried them both in the city of Sarras. Also Sir Galahad prayed you to remember of this unsyker world, as ye behight him when ye were together.'

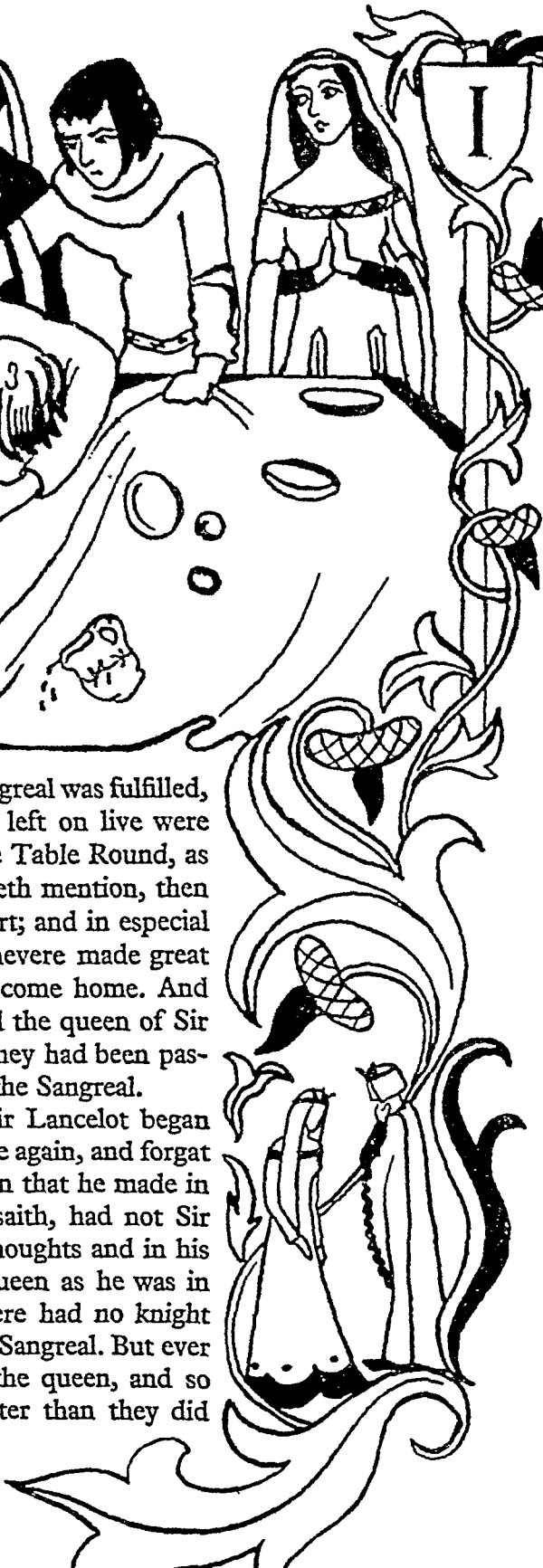
'This is true,' said Sir Lancelot. 'Now I trust to God his prayer shall avail me.'

THE BOOK OF
SIR LANCELOT AND
QUEEN GUINEVERE



SO after the quest of the Sangreal was fulfilled, and all knights that were left on live were come home again unto the Table Round, as the book of the Sangreal maketh mention, then was there great joy in the court; and in especial King Arthur and Queen Guinevere made great joy of the remnant that were come home. And passing glad was the king and the queen of Sir Lancelot and of Sir Bors, for they had been passing long away in the quest of the Sangreal.

Then, as the book saith, Sir Lancelot began to resort unto Queen Guinevere again, and forgot the promise and the perfection that he made in the quest. For, as the book saith, had not Sir Lancelot been in his privy thoughts and in his mind so set inwardly to the queen as he was in seeming outward to God, there had no knight passed him in the quest of the Sangreal. But ever his thoughts privily were on the queen, and so they loved together more hotter than they did



toforehand, and had many such privy draughts together, that many in the court spake of it, and in especial Sir Agravayne, Sir Gawayne's brother, for he was ever open-mouthed.

So it befell that Sir Lancelot had many resorts of ladies and damsels which daily resorted unto him, [that besought him] to be their champion. In all such matters of right Sir Lancelot applied him daily to do for the pleasure of Our Lord, Jesu Christ, and ever as much as he might he withdrew him from the company of Queen Guinevere, for to eschew the slander and noise. Wherefore the queen waxed wroth with Sir Lancelot.

So on a day she called him unto her chamber, and said thus:

'Sir Lancelot, I see and feel daily that your love beginneth to slake, for ye have no joy to be in my presence, but ever ye are out of this court, and quarrels and matters ye have nowadays for ladies, maidens and gentlewomen [more] than ever ye were wont to have beforehand.'

'Ah, madam,' said Sir Lancelot, 'in this ye must hold me excused for divers causes. One is, I was but late in the quest of the Sangreal, and I thank God of His great mercy, and never of my deserving, that I saw in that my quest as much as ever saw any sinful man living, and so was it told me. And if that I had not had my privy thoughts to return to your love again as I do, I had seen as great mysteries as ever saw my son Sir Galahad, Sir Percivale, other Sir Bors. And therefore, madam, I was but late in that quest, and wit you well, madam, it may not be yet lightly forgotten the high service in whom I did my diligent labour.

'Also, madam, wit you well that there be many men speaketh of our love in this court, and have you and me greatly in await, as this Sir Agravayne and Sir Mordred. And madam, wit you well I dread them more for your sake than for any fear I have of them myself, for I may happen to escape and rid myself in a great need, where, madam, ye must abide all that will be said unto you. And then if that ye fall in any distress throughout wilful folly, then is there none other help but by me and my blood.

'And wit you well, madam, the boldness of you and me will bring us to shame and slander; and that were me loth to see you dishonoured. And that is the cause I take upon me more for to do for damsels and maidens than ever I did tofore, that men should understand my joy and my delight is my pleasure to have ado for damsels and maidens.'

All this while the queen stood still and let Sir Lancelot say what he would. And when he had all said she brast out of weeping, and so she sobbed and wept a great while. And when she might speak she said,

'Sir Lancelot, now I well understand that thou art a false recreant knight and a common lecher, and lovest and holdest other ladies, and of me thou hast disdain and scorn. For wit thou well, now I understand thy falsehood, I shall never love thee more. And look thou be never so hardy to come in my sight. And right here I discharge thee this court, that thou never come within it, and I forfend thee my fellowship, and upon pain of thy head that thou see me never more!'

Right so Sir Lancelot departed with great heaviness, that unneth he might sustain himself for great dole-making.

Then he called Sir Bors, Ector de Maris, and Sir Lionel, and told them how the queen had forfended him the court, and so he was in will to depart into his own country.

'Fair sir,' said Bors de Ganis, 'ye shall not depart out of this land by mine advice, for ye must remember you what ye are, and renowned the most noblest knight of the world; and many great matters ye have in hand. And women in their hastiness will do oftentimes that after them sore repenteth. And therefore by mine advice ye shall take your horse, and ride to the good hermitage here beside Windsor, that sometime was a good knight; his name is Sir Brascias. And there shall ye abide till that I send you word of better tidings.'

'Brother,' said Sir Lancelot, 'wit you well I am full loth to depart out of this realm, but the queen hath defended me so highly, that meseemeth she will never be my good lady as she hath been.'

'Say ye never so,' said Sir Bors, 'for many times or this time she hath been wroth with you, and after that she was the first [that] repented it.'

'Ye say well,' said Sir Lancelot, 'for now will I do by your counsel, and take mine horse and mine harness, and ride to the hermit Sir Brascias, and there will I repose me till I hear some manner of tidings from you. But, fair brother, in that ye can get me the love of my lady, Queen Guinevere.'

'Sir,' said Sir Bors, 'ye need not to move me of such matters, for well ye wot I will do what I may to please you.'

And then Sir Lancelot departed suddenly, and no creature wist where he was become, but Sir Bors. So when Sir Lancelot was departed, the queen outward made no manner of sorrow in showing to none of his blood nor to none other. But wit ye well, inwardly, as the book saith, she took great thought, but she bare it out with a proud countenance as though she felt no thought nother danger.

So the queen let make a privy dinner in London unto the knights of the Round Table, and all was for to show outward that she had as

great joy in all other knights of the Round Table as she had in Sir Lancelot. So there was all only at that dinner Sir Gawayne and his brethren, that is for to say Sir Agravayne, Sir Gaheris, Sir Gareth and Sir Mordred. Also there was Sir Bors de Ganis, Sir Blamour de Ganis, Sir Bleoberis de Ganis, Sir Galyhad, Sir Galyhodin, Sir Ector de Maris, Sir Lionel, Sir Palomydes, Sir Safer his brother, Sir La Cote Male Tayle, Sir Parsaunt, Sir Ironside, Sir Braundiles, Sir Kay le Seneschal, Sir Mador de la Porte, Sir Patryse, a knight of Ireland, Sir Alyduke, Sir Ascamore, and Sir Pynel le Savage, which was cousin to Sir Lamerak de Galis, the good knight that Sir Gawayne and his brethren slew by treason.

And so these four and twenty knights should dine with the queen in a privy place by themselves, and there was made a great feast of all manner of dainties. But Sir Gawayne had a custom that he used daily at meat and at supper, that he loved well all manner of fruit, and in especial apples and pears. And therefore whosoever dined other feasted Sir Gawayne would commonly purvey for good fruit for him. And so did the queen; for to please Sir Gawayne she let purvey for him all manner of fruit.

For Sir Gawayne was a passing hot knight of nature. And this Sir Pynel hated Sir Gawayne by cause of his kinsman Sir Lamerak's death, and therefore for pure envy and hate Sir Pynel enpoisoned certain apples for to enpoison Sir Gawayne.

So this was well yet unto the end of the meat; and so it befell by misfortune a good knight Sir Patryse, which was cousin unto Sir Mador de la Porte, took an apple for [he] was enchafed with heat of wine. And it mishapped him to take a poisoned apple. And when he had eaten it he swelled sore till he brast, and there Sir Patryse fell down suddenly dead among them. Then every knight leapt from the board ashamed, and araged for wrath, out of their wits, for they wist not what to say, considering Queen Guinevere made the feast and dinner; they had all suspicion unto her.

'My lady, the queen,' said Sir Gawayne. 'Madam, wit you that this dinner was made for me, for all folks that knoweth my condition understand that I love well fruit. And now I see well I had near been slain. Therefore, madam, I dread me lest ye will be shamed.'

Then the queen stood still and was so sore abashed, that she wist not what to say.

'This shall not so be ended,' said Sir Mador de la Porte, 'for here have I lost a full noble knight of my blood; and therefore upon this shame and despite I will be revenged to the utterance!'

And there openly Sir Mador appelled the queen of the death of his cousin, Sir Patryse.

Then stood they all still, that none would speak a word against him, for they all had great suspicion unto the queen by cause she let make that dinner. And the queen was so abashed that she could none other ways do, but wept so heartily that she fell on a swough. So with this noise and cry came to them King Arthur, and when he wist of the trouble he was a passing heavy man.

And ever Sir Mador stood still before the king, and appelled the queen of treason. (For the custom was such that time that all manner of shameful death was called treason.)

'Fair lords,' said King Arthur, 'me repenteth of this trouble, but the case is so I may not have ado in this matter, for I must be a rightful judge. And that repenteth me that I may not do battle for my wife, for as I deem this deed came never by her. And therefore I suppose she shall not be all distained, but that some good knight shall put his body in jeopardy for my queen rather than she shall be brent in a wrong quarrel. And therefore, Sir Mador, be not so hasty, for [hardie] it may happen she shall not be all friendless. And therefore desire thou thy day of battle, and she shall purvey her of some good knight that shall answer you, other else it were to me great shame, and to all my court.'

'My gracious lord,' said Sir Mador, 'ye must hold me excused, for though ye be our king in that degree ye are but a knight as we are, and ye are sworn unto knighthood also well as we be. And therefore I beseech you that ye be not displeased, for there is none of all these four and twenty knights that were bidden to this dinner but all they have great suspicion unto the queen. What say ye all, my lords?' said Sir Mador.

Then they answered by and by and said they could not excuse the queen for why she made the dinner, and other it must come by her other by her servants.

'Alas,' said the queen, 'I made this dinner for a good intent, and never for none evil, so Almighty Jesu help me in my right, as I was never purposed to do such evil deeds, and that I report me unto God.'

'My lord the king,' said Sir Mador, 'I require you as ye be a righteous king, give me my day that I may have justice.'

'Well,' said the king, 'this day fifteen days look thou be ready armed on horseback in the meadow beside Winchester. And if it so fall that there be any knight to encounter against you, there may you do your best, and God speed the right. And if so befall that there be no knight

ready at that day, then must my queen be brent, and there she shall be ready to have her judgment.'

'I am answered,' said Sir Mador.

And every knight yode where him liked.

So when the king and the queen were together the king asked the queen how this case befell.

Then the [queen] said, 'Sir, as Jesu be my help!' She wist not how nother in what manner.

'Where is Sir Lancelot?' said King Arthur. 'An he were here he would not grudge to do battle for you.'

'Sir,' said the queen, 'I wot not where he is, but his brother and his kinsmen deem that he be not within this realm.'

'That me repenteth,' said King Arthur, 'for an he were here he would soon stint this strife. Well, then I will counsel you,' said the king, 'that ye go unto Sir Bors, and pray him for to [do] battle for you for Sir Lancelot's sake, and upon my life he will not refuse you. For well I see,' said the king, 'that none of the four and twenty knights that were at your dinner where Sir Patryse was slain, that will do battle for you, nother none of them will say well of you, and that shall be great slander to you in this court. But now I miss Sir Lancelot, for an he were here he would put soon me in my heart's ease. What aileth you,' said the king, 'that ye cannot keep Sir Lancelot upon your side? For wit you well,' said the king, 'who that hath Sir Lancelot upon his party hath the most man of worship in this world upon his side. Now go your way,' said the king unto the queen, 'and require Sir Bors to do battle for you for Sir Lancelot's sake.'

So the queen departed from the king, and sent for Sir Bors into the chamber. And when he came she besought him of succour.

'Madam,' said he, 'what would ye that I did? For I may not with my worship have ado in this matter, because I was at the same dinner, for dread of any of those knights would have you in suspicion. Also, Madam,' said Sir Bors, 'now miss ye Sir Lancelot, for he would not a failed you in your right nother in your wrong, for when ye have been in right great dangers he hath succoured you. And now ye have driven him out of this country, by whom ye and all we were daily worshipped by. Therefore, madam, I marvel how ye dare for shame to require me to do any thing for you, in so much ye have enchased him out of your court by whom we were up borne and honoured.'

'Alas, fair knight,' said the queen, 'I put me wholly in your grace, and all that is amiss I will amend as ye will counsel me.'

And therewith she kneeled down upon both her knees, and besought Sir Bors to have mercy upon her: 'Other else [I] shall have a shameful death, and thereto I never offended.'

Right so came King Arthur, and found the queen kneeling. And then Sir Bors took her up, and said,

'Madam, ye do me great dishonour.'

'Ah, gentle knight,' said the king, 'have mercy upon my queen, courteous knight, for I am now in certain she is untruly defamed. And therefore, courteous knight,' the king said, 'promise her to do battle for her, I require you for the love ye owe unto Sir [Lancelot].'

'My lord,' said Sir Bors, 'ye require me the greatest thing that any man may require me. And wit you well if I grant to do battle for the queen I shall wrath many of my fellowship of the Table Round. But as for that,' said Sir Bors, 'I will grant for my lord Sir Lancelot's sake, and for your sake, I will at that day be the queen's champion unless that there come by adventures a better knight than I am to do battle for her.'

'Will ye promise me this,' said the king, 'by your faith?'

'Yea sir,' said Sir Bors, 'of that I shall not fail you, nother her; but if there come a better knight than I am, and then shall he have the battle.'

Then was the king and the queen passing glad, and so departed, and thanked him heartily.

Then Sir Bors departed secretly upon a day, and rode unto Sir Lancelot thereas he was with Sir Brascias and told him of all this adventure.

'Ah Jesu,' Sir Lancelot said, 'this is come happily as I would have it. And therefore I pray you make you ready to do battle, but look that ye tarry till ye see me come as long as ye may. For I am sure Sir Mador is an hot knight when he is enchafed, for the more ye suffer him the hastier will he be to battle.'

'Sir,' said Sir Bors, 'let me deal with him. Doubt ye not ye shall have all your will.'

So departed Sir Bors from him and came to the court again. Then was it noised in all the court that Sir Bors should do battle for the queen; wherefore many knights were displeased with him, that he would take upon him to do battle in the queen's quarrel; for there were but few knights in all the court but they deemed the queen was in the wrong, and that she had done that treason. So Sir Bors answered thus to his fellows of the Table Round,

'Wit you well, my fair lords, it were shame to us all an we suffered to see the most noble queen of the world to be shamed openly,

considering her lord and our lord is the man of most worship christened, and he hath ever worshipped us all in all places.'

Many answered him again: 'As for our most noble King Arthur, we love him and honour him as well as ye do, but as for Queen Guinevere we love her not, because she is a destroyer of good knights.'

'Fair lords,' said Sir Bors, 'meseemeth ye say not as ye should say, for never yet in my days knew I never ne heard say that ever she was a destroyer of good knights, but at all times as far as ever I could know she was a maintainer of good knights; and ever she hath been large and free of her goods to all good knights, and the most bounteous lady of her gifts and her good grace, that ever I saw other heard speak of. And therefore it were shame to us all and to our most noble king's wife whom we serve [an we suffered her] to be shamefully slain. And wit ye well,' said Sir Bors, 'I will not suffer it, for I dare say so much, for the queen is not guilty of Sir Patryse's death, for she ought him never none evil will, nother none of the four and twenty knights that were at that dinner; for I dare say for good love she bad us to dinner, and not for no mal engine. And that I doubt not shall be proved hereafter, for howsomever the game goeth, there was treason among us.'

Then some said to Bors: 'We may well believe your words.' And so some were well pleased, and some were not.

So the day came on fast until the even that the battle should [be]. Then the queen sent for Sir Bors and asked him how he was disposed.

'Truly, madam,' said he, 'I am disposed in likewise as I promised you, that is to say I shall not fail you, unless there by adventure come a better knight than I am to do battle for you. Then, madam, I am of you discharged of my promise.'

'Will ye,' said the queen, 'that I tell my lord the king thus?'

'Do as it pleaseth you, madam.'

Then the queen yode unto the king and told the answer of Sir Bors.

'Well, have ye no doubt,' said the king, 'of Sir Bors, for I call him now that is living one of the noblest knights of the world, and most perfectest man.' And thus it passed on till the morn, and so the king and the queen and all manner of knights that were there at that time drew them unto the meadow beside Winchester where the battle [should be]. And so when the king was come with the queen and many knights of the Table Round, so the queen was then put in the constable's award, and a great fire made about an iron stake, that an Sir Mador de la Porte had the better, she should there be brent: for such custom was used in those days, for favour, love nother affinity, there should be

none other but righteous judgment, as well upon a king as upon a knight, and as well upon a queen as upon another poor lady.

So this meanwhile came in Sir Mador de la Porte, and took his [oath] before the king, how that the queen did this treason until his cousin Sir Patryse, 'and unto mine oath I will prove it with my body, hand for hand, who that would say the contrary.'

Right so came in Sir Bors de Ganis, and said, that as for Queen Guinevere, 'she is in the right, and that will I make good that she is not culpable of this treason that is put upon her.'

'Then make thee ready,' said Sir Mador, 'and we shall prove whether thou be in the right or I.'

'Sir Mador,' said Sir Bors, 'wit you well I know you for a good knight. Not for then I shall not fear you so greatly, but I trust to God I shall be able to withstand your malice. But thus much have I promised my lord Arthur and my lady the queen, that I shall do battle for her in this cause to the utterest, unless that there come a better knight than I am and discharge me.'

'Is that all?' said Sir Mador, 'other come thou off and do battle with me, other else say nay.'

'Take your horse,' said Sir Bors, 'and as I suppose, I shall not tarry long but ye shall be answered.'

Then either departed to their tents and made them ready to horse-back as they thought best. And anon Sir Mador came into the field with his shield on his shoulder and his spear in his hand; and so rode about the place crying unto King Arthur: 'Bid your champion come forth an he dare.'

Then was Sir Bors ashamed and took his horse and came to the lists' end. And then was he ware where came from a wood there fast by a knight all armed, upon a white horse, with a strange shield of strange arms; and he came driving all that his horse might run. And so he came to Sir Bors, and said thus:

'Fair knight, I pray you be not displeased, for here must a better knight than ye are have this battle. Therefore I pray you withdraw you, for wit you well I have had this day a right great journey, and this battle ought to be mine. And so I promised you when I spake with you last, and with all my heart I thank you of your good will.'

Then Sir Bors rode unto King Arthur and told him how there was a knight come that would have the battle to fight for the queen.

'What knight is he?' said the king.

'I wot not,' said Sir Bors, 'but such covenant he made with me to be here this day. Now my lord,' said Sir Bors, 'here I am discharged.'

Then the king called to that knight, and asked him if he would fight for the queen.

Then he answered and said, 'Sir, therefore come I hither. And therefore, sir king, tarry me no longer, for anon as I have finished this battle I must depart hence, for I have to do many battles elsewhere. For wit you well,' said the knight, 'this is dishonour to you and to all knights of the Round Table, to see and know so noble a lady and so courteous as Queen Guinevere is, thus to be rebuked and shamed amongst you.'

Then they all marvelled what knight that might be that so took [the battle] upon him, for there was not one that knew him, but if it were Sir Bors. Then said Sir Mador de la Porte unto the king:

'Now let me wit with whom I shall have ado.'

And then they rode to the lists' end, and there they couched their spears, and ran together with all their mights. And anon Sir Mador's spear brake all to pieces, but the other's spear held, and bare Sir Mador's horse and all backward to the earth a great fall. But mightily and deliverly he avoided his horse from him and put his shield before him, and drew his sword, and bad the other knight alight and do battle with him on foot.

Then that knight descended down from his horse and put his shield before him and drew his sword. And so they came eagerly unto battle, and either gave other many sad strokes, tracing and traversing, and foining together with their swords as it were wild boars, thus fighting nigh an hour; for this Sir Mador was a strong knight, and mightily proved in many strong battles. But at the last this knight smote Sir Mador grovelling upon the earth, and the [knight] stepped near him to have pulled Sir Mador flatling upon the ground; and therewith Sir Mador arose, and in his rising he smote that knight through the thick of the thighs that the blood brast out fiercely. And when he felt himself so wounded, and saw his blood, he let him arise upon his feet, and then he gave him such a buffet upon the helm that he fell to the earth flatling. And therewith he strode to him to have pulled off his helm off his head. And so Sir Mador prayed that knight to save his life. And so he yielded him as overcome, and released the queen of his quarrel.

'I will not grant thee thy life,' said the knight, 'only that thou freely release the queen for ever, and that no mention be made upon Sir Patryse's tomb that ever Queen Guinevere consented to that treason.'

'All this shall be done,' said Sir Mador, 'I clearly discharge my quarrel for ever.'

Then the knight's parters of the lists took up Sir Mador, and led him till his tent. And the other knight went straight to the stairfoot where

sat King Arthur. And by that time was the queen come to the king, and either kissed other heartily.

And when the king saw that knight, he stooped down to him, and thanked him, and in likewise did the queen. And the king prayed him put off his helmet, and to repose him, and to take a sop of wine.

And then he put off his helm to drink, and then every knight knew him that it was Sir Lancelot. And anon as the king wist that, he took the queen in his hand, and yode unto Sir Lancelot, and said,

‘Sir, grant mercy of your great travail that ye have had this day for me and for my queen.’

‘My lord,’ said Sir Lancelot, ‘wit you well I ought of right ever [to be] in your quarrel, and in my lady the queen’s quarrel, to do battle; for ye are the man that gave me the high order of knighthood, and that day my lady, your queen, did me worship. And else I had been shamed; for that same day that ye made me knight, through my hastiness I lost my sword, and my lady, your queen, found it, and lapped it in her train, and gave me my sword when I had need thereto; and else had [I] been shamed among all knights. And therefore, my lord Arthur, I promised her at that day ever to be her knight in right other in wrong.’

‘Gramercy,’ said the king, ‘for this journey. And wit you well,’ said the king, ‘I shall acquit your goodness.’

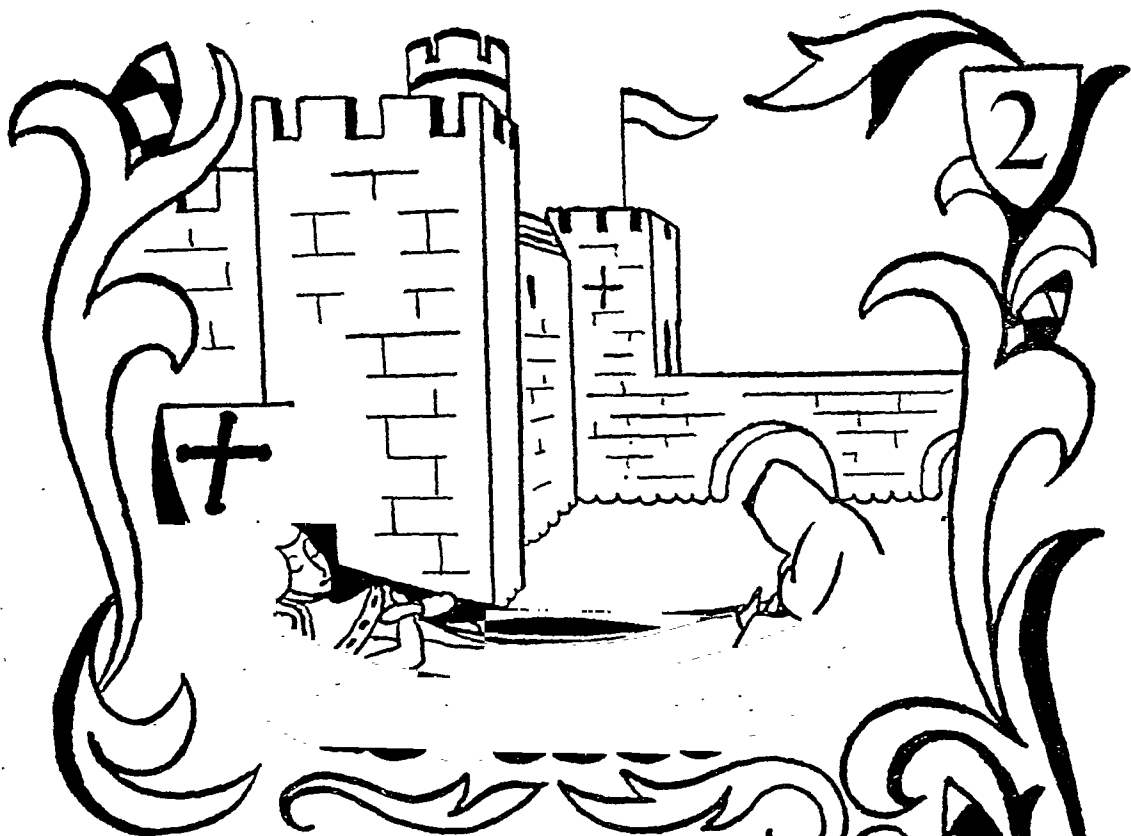
And evermore the queen beheld Sir Lancelot, and wept so tenderly that she sank almost to the ground for sorrow that he had done to her so great kindness where she shewed him great unkindness. Then the knights of his blood drew unto him, and there either of them made great joy of other. And so came all the knights of the Table Round that were there at that time, and welcomed him. And then Sir Mador was healed of his leech-craft, and Sir Lancelot was healed of his play. And so there was made great joy and many mirths there was made in that court.

And so it befell that the damsel of the lake, that hight Nyneve, which wedded the good knight Sir Pelleas, and so she came to the court, for ever she did great goodness unto King Arthur and to all his knights through her sorcery and enchantments. And so when she heard how the queen was grieved for the death of Sir Patryse, then she told it openly that she was never guilty; and there she disclosed by whom it was done, and named him, Sir Pynel, and for what cause he did it. There it was openly known and disclosed, and so the queen was [excused]. And this knight Sir Pynel fled into his country, and was openly known that he enpoisoned the apples at that feast to that intent to have destroyed Sir

Gawayne, by cause Sir Gawayne and his brethren destroyed Sir Lamerak de Galis, which Sir Pynel was cousin unto.

Then was Sir Patryse buried in the church of Westminster in a tomb, and thereupon was written: Here lieth Sir Patryse of Ireland, slain by Sir Pynel le Savage, that enpoisoned apples to have slain Sir Gawayne, and by misfortune Sir Patryse ate one of those apples, and then suddenly he brast. Also there was written upon the tomb that Queen Guinevere was appelled of treason of the death of Sir Patryse, by Sir Mador de la Porte; and there was made the mention how Sir Lancelot fought with him for Queen Guinevere and overcame him in plain battle. All this was written upon the tomb of Sir Patryse in excusing of the queen.

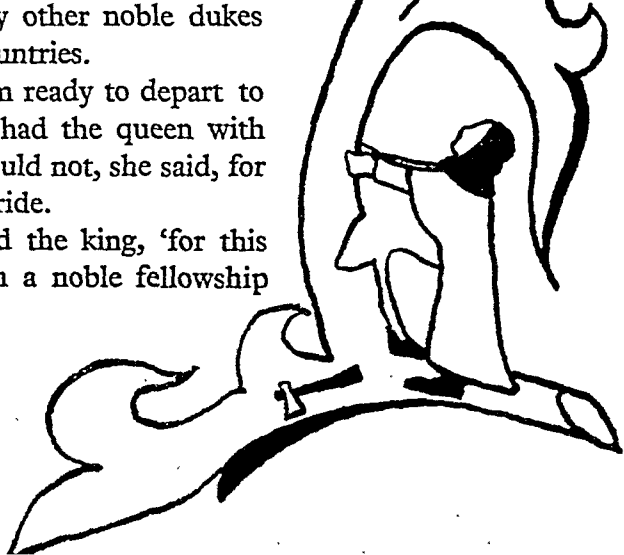
And then Sir Mador sued daily and long, to have the queen's good grace; and so by the means of Sir Lancelot he caused him to stand in the queen's good grace, and all was forgiven.



THUS it passed until our Lady Day of the Assumption. Within a fifteen days of that feast the king let cry a great jousts and a tournament that should be at that day at Camelot, otherwise called Winchester. And the king let cry that he and the king of Scots would joust against all the world. And when this cry was made, thither came many good knights. That is to say the King of North Galis and King Anguish of Ireland, and the King with the Hundred Knights, and Sir Galahalt the Haut Prince, and the King of Northumberland, and many other noble dukes and earls of others divers countries.

So King Arthur made him ready to depart to his jousts, and would have had the queen with him; but at that time she would not, she said, for she was sick and might not ride.

‘That me repenteth,’ said the king, ‘for this seven year ye saw not such a noble fellowship



together except at the Whitsuntide when Sir Galahad departed from the court.'

'Truly,' said the queen, 'ye must hold me excused, I may not be there.'

And many deemed the queen would not be there because of Sir Lancelot, for he would not ride with the king; for he said he was not whole of the play of Sir Mador. Wherefore the king was heavy and passing wroth, and so he departed toward Winchester with his fellowship.

And so by the way the king lodged at a town called Astolat, that is in English Guildford. And there the king lay in the castle. So when the king was departed the queen called Sir Lancelot unto her, and said thus:

'Sir, ye are greatly to blame thus to hold you behind my lord. What will your enemies and mine say and deem? "See how Sir Lancelot holdeth him ever behind the king, and so doth the queen also, for that they would have their pleasure together." And thus will they say,' said the queen.

'Have ye no doubt, madam,' said Sir Lancelot. 'I allow your wit. It is of late come syne ye were waxen so wise! And therefore, madam, at this time I will be ruled by your counsel, and this night I will take my rest, and to-morrow betime I will take my way toward Winchester. But wit you well,' said Sir Lancelot unto the queen, 'at that jousts I will be against the king, and against all his fellowship.'

'Sir, ye may there do as ye list,' said the queen, 'but by my counsel ye shall not be against your king and your fellowship, for there been full many hardy knights of your blood.'

'Madam,' said Sir Lancelot, 'I shall take the adventure that God will give me.'

And so upon the morn early he heard mass and dined, and so he took his leave of the queen and departed. And then he rode so much unto the time he came to Astolat; and there it happened him that in the evening-tide he came to an old baron's place that hight Sir Barnard of Astolat. And as Sir Lancelot entered into his lodging, King Arthur espied him as he did walk in a garden beside the castle; he knew him well enough.

'Well, sirs,' said King Arthur unto his knights that were by him beside the castle, 'I have now espied one knight,' he said, 'that will play his play at the jousts, I undertake.'

'Who is that?' said the knights.

'At this time ye shall not wit for me,' said the king, and smiled, and went to his lodging.

So when Sir Lancelot was in his lodging, and unarmed in his chamber, the old baron Sir Barnard came to him and welcomed him in the best manner, but he knew not Sir Lancelot.

'Fair sir,' said Sir Lancelot till his host, 'I would pray you to lend me a shield that were not openly known, for mine is well known.'

'Sir,' said his host, 'ye shall have your desire, for meseemeth ye be one of the likeliest knights that ever I saw, and therefore, sir, I shall shew you friendship.' And said, 'Sir, wit you well I have two sons that were but late made knights. And the eldest hight Sir Tirry, and he was hurt that same day he was made knight, and he may not ride, and his shield [ye shall have]; for that is not known, I dare say, but here [and] in no place [else].' And his younger son hight Lavayne. 'And if it please you, he shall ride with you unto that jousts for he is of his age strong and wight. For much my heart giveth unto you that ye should be a noble knight. And therefore I pray you to tell me your name,' said Sir Barnard.

'As for that,' said Sir Lancelot, 'ye must hold me excused as at this time, and if God give me grace to speed well at the jousts I shall come again and tell you my name. But I pray you, in any wise let me have your son, Sir Lavayne, with me, and that I may have his brother's shield.'

'Sir, all this shall be done,' said Sir Barnard.

So this old baron had a daughter that was called that time the fair maiden of Astolat, and ever she beheld Sir Lancelot wonderfully.

[And as the book saith, she cast such a love unto Sir Lancelot that she could never withdraw her love, wherefore she died and her name was Elaine le Blanc.]

So thus as she came to and fro she was so hot in love that she besought Sir Lancelot to wear upon him at the jousts a token of hers.

'Damsel,' said Sir Lancelot, 'an if I grant you that, ye may say that I do more for your love than ever I did for lady or gentlewoman.'

Then he remembered himself that he would go to the jousts disguised, and because he had never aforn borne no manner of token of no damsel, he bethought him to bear a token of hers, that none of his blood thereby might know him. And then he said,

'Fair maiden, I will grant you to wear a token of yours upon mine helmet. And therefore what is it show ye it me.'

'Sir,' she said, 'it is a red sleeve of mine, of scarlet, well embroidered with great pearls.'

And so she brought it him. So Sir Lancelot received it, and said, 'Never did I erst so much for no damsel.'

Then Sir Lancelot betook the fair maiden his shield in keeping, and prayed her to keep it until time that he came again. And so that night he had merry rest and great cheer, for this damsel Elaine was ever about Sir Lancelot all the while she might be suffered.

So upon a day, on the morn, King Arthur and all his knights departed, for there the king had tarried three days to abide his noble knights. And so when the king was ridden, Sir Lancelot and Sir Lavayne made them ready to ride, and either of them had white shields, and the red sleeve Sir Lancelot let carry with him.

And so they took their leave at Sir Barnard, the old baron, and at his daughter, the fair maiden, and then they rode so long till they came to Camelot, that time called Winchester. And there was great press of kings, dukes, earls and barons, and many noble knights. But Sir Lancelot was lodged privily by the means of Lavayne with a rich burgess, that no man in that town was ware what they were. And so they reposed them there till our Lady Day of the Assumption, that the great jousts should be.

So when trumpets blew unto the field, and King Arthur was set on high upon a chafflet to behold who did best, [but as the French book saith, the king would not suffer Sir Gawayne to go from him, for never had Sir Gawayne the better an Sir Lancelot were in the field; and many times was Sir Gawayne rebuked so when Sir Lancelot was in the field in any jousts disguised.] Then some of the kings, as King Anguish of Ireland and the King of Scots, were that time turned to be upon the side of King Arthur. And then the other party was the King of North Galis, and the King with the Hundred Knights, and the King of Northumberland, and Sir Galahalt, the Haut Prince. But these three knights and this duke was passing weak to hold against Arthur's party, for with him were the noblest knights of the world.

So then they withdrew them either party from other, and every man made him ready in his best manner to do what he might. Then Sir Lancelot made him ready, and put the red sleeve upon his head, and fastened it fast. And so Sir Lancelot and Sir Lavayne departed out of Winchester privily, and rode until a little leaved wood behind the party that held against King Arthur's party. And there they held them still till the parties smote together. And then came in the King of Scots and the King of Ireland on King Arthur's party, and against them came in the King of Northumberland, and the King with the Hundred Knights.

And there began a great medley, and there the King of Scots smote

down the King of Northumberland, and the King with the Hundred Knights smote down King Anguish of Ireland. Then Sir Palomydes that was on Arthur's party he encountered with Sir Galahalt, and either of them smote down other, and either party help their lords [on] horseback again.

So there began a strong assail on both parties.

And then came in Sir Braundiles, Sir Sagramore le Desirous, Sir Dodynas le Savage, Sir Kay le Seneschal, Sir Gryfflet le Fyz de Dieu, Sir Lucan le Butler, Sir Bedyvere, Sir Agravayne, Sir Gaheris, Sir Mordred, Sir Meliot de Logres, Sir Ozanna le Cure Hardy, Sir Safer, Sir Epynogrys, Sir Galleron of Galway. All these fifteen knights that were knights of the Round Table. So these with no other came in together, and beat aback the King of Northumberland and the King of North Galis.

When Sir Lancelot saw this, as he hoved in the little leaved wood, then he said unto Sir Lavayne,

'See yonder is a company of good knights, and they hold them together as boars that were chased with dogs.'

'That is truth,' said Sir Lavayne.

'Now,' said Sir Lancelot, 'an ye will help a little, ye shall see a yonder fellowship that chaseth now these men on our side, that they shall go as fast backward as they went forward.'

'Sir, spare not,' said Sir Lavayne, 'for I shall do what I may.'

Then Sir Lancelot and Sir Lavayne came in at the thickest of the press, and there Sir Lancelot smote down Sir Braundiles, Sir Sagramore, Sir Dodynas, Sir Kay, Sir Gryfflet, and all this he did with one spear. And Sir Lavayne smote down Sir Lucan le Butler and Sir Bedyvere. And then Sir Lancelot gat another great spear, and there he smote down Sir Agravayne and Sir Gaheris, Sir Mordred, Sir Meliot de Logres; and Sir Lavayne smote down Sir Ozanna le Cure Hardy.

And then Sir Lancelot drew his sword, and there he smote on the right hand and on the left hand, and by great force he unhorsed Sir Safer, Sir Epynogrys, and Sir Galleron.

And then the knights of the Table Round withdrew them aback, after they had gotten their horses as well as they might.

'Ah, mercy Jesu,' said Sir Gawayne. 'What knight is yonder that doth so marvellous deeds in that field?'

'I wot what he is,' said the king, 'but as at this time I will not name him.'

'Sir,' said Sir Gawayne, 'I would say it were Sir Lancelot by his riding

and his buffets that I see him deal. But ever meseemeth it should not be he for that he beareth the red sleeve upon his helmet; for I wist him never bear token at no jousts of lady ne gentlewoman.'

'Let him be,' said King Arthur, 'for he will be better known and do more or ever he depart.'

Then the party that was against King Arthur were well comforted, and then they held them together that beforhand were sore rebuked. Then Sir Bors, Sir Ector de Maris, [and] Sir Lionel they called unto them the knights of their blood, as Sir Blamore de Ganis, Sir Bleoberis, Sir Alyduke, Sir Galyhud, Sir Galyhodyn, Sir Bellengerus le Beuse. So these nine knights of Sir Lancelot's kin thrust in mightily, for they were all noble knights; and they of great hate and despite thought to rebuke Sir Lancelot and Sir Lavayne, for they knew them not.

And so they came hurling together, and smote down many knights of North Galis and of Northumberland. And when Sir Lancelot saw them fare so, he gat a great spear in his hand; and there encountered with him all at once Sir Bors, Sir Ector, and Sir Lionel, and they three smote him at once with their spears, and with force of themself they smote Sir Lancelot's horse revers to the earth. And by misfortune Sir Bors smote Sir Lancelot through the shield into the side, and the spear brake, and the head left still in the side.

When Sir Lavayne saw his master lie on the ground, he ran to the King of Scots and smote him to the earth; and by great force he took his horse, and brought him to Sir Lancelot, and margre of them all he made him to mount upon that horse. And then Sir Lancelot gat a spear in his hand, and there he smote Sir Bors, horse and man, to the earth. And in the same wise he served Sir Ector and Sir Lionel; and Sir Lavayne smote down Sir Blamour de Ganis. And then Sir Lancelot drew his sword, for he felt himself so sore hurt that he weened there to have had his death. And then he smote Sir Bleoberis such a buffet on the helmet that he fell down to the earth in a sown. And in the same wise he served Sir Alyduke and Sir Galyhud. And Sir Lavayne smote down Sir Bellengerus, that was [son] to Alysander le Orphelin.

And by this was done was Sir Bors horsed again and in came with Sir Ector and Sir Lionel, and all they three smote with swords upon Sir Lancelot's helmet. And when he felt their buffets and with that his wound grieved him grievously, then he thought to do what he might while he could endure. And then he gave Sir Bors such a buffet that he made him bow his head passing low; and therewithal he raced off his helm, and might have slain him but when he saw their visages so pulled him down. And in the same wise he served Sir Ector and Sir Lionel;

for, as the book saith, he might have slain them, but when he saw their visages his heart might not serve him thereto, but left them there.

[And then afterwards he hurled into the thickest press of them all, and did there the marvelloust deeds of arms that ever man saw] and ever Sir Lavayne with him. And there Sir Lancelot with his sword smote down and pulled down, as the French book sayeth, mo than thirty knights, and the most party were of the Table Round. And there Sir Lavayne did full well that day, for he smote down ten knights of the Table Round.

‘Mercy, Jesu,’ said Sir Gawayne unto King Arthur, ‘I marvel what knight that he is with the red sleeve.’

‘Sir,’ said King Arthur, ‘he will be known or ever he depart.’

And then the king blew unto lodging, and the prize was given by heralds unto the knight with the white shield that bare the red sleeve. Then came the King of North Galis, and the King of Northumberland, and the King with the Hundred Knights, and Sir Galahalt the Haut Prince, [and] said unto Sir Lancelot:

‘Fair knight, God you bless, for much have ye done for us this day. And therefore we pray you that ye will come with us that ye may receive the honour and the prize as ye have worshipfully deserved it.’

‘Fair lords,’ said Sir Lancelot, ‘wit ye well, if I have deserved thank I have sore bought it, and that me repenteth it, for I am never like to escape with the life. Therefore, my fair lords, I pray you that ye will suffer me to depart where me liketh, for I am sore hurt, and I take none force of none honour, for I had lever repose me than to be lord of all the world.’

And therewithal he groaned piteously, and rode a great wallop awayward from them until he came under a wood’s eves. And when he saw that he was from the field nigh a mile, that he was sure he might not be seen, then he said with an high voice and with a great groan,

‘Ah, gentle knight, Sir Lavayne! help me that this truncheon were out of my side, for it sticketh so sore that it nigh slayeth me.’

‘Ah mine own lord,’ said Sir Lavayne, ‘I would fain do that might please you, but I dread me sore an I pull out the truncheon that ye shall be in peril of death.’

‘I charge you,’ said Sir Lancelot, ‘as ye love me, draw it out!’

And therewithal he descended from his horse, and right so did Sir Lavayne; and forthwithal he drew the truncheon out of his side, and gave a great shriek and a grisly groan, and the blood brast out nigh a

pint at once, that at the last he sank down upon his arse, and so sowned, pale and deadly.

‘Alas,’ said Sir Lavayne, ‘what shall I do?’

And then he turned Sir Lancelot into the wind, and so he lay there nigh half an hour as he had been dead. And so at the last Sir Lancelot cast up his eyen, and said,

‘Ah, Lavayne, help me that I were on my horse! For here is fast by within this two mile a gentle hermit that sometime was a full noble knight and a great lord of possessions. And for great goodness he hath taken him to wilful poverty, and forsaken mighty lands. And his name is Sir Baudwyn of Bretayne, and he is a full noble surgeon and a good leech. Now let see, and help me up that I were there, for ever my heart giveth me that I shall never die of my cousin-germain’s hands.’

And then with great pain Sir Lavayne help him upon his horse. And then they rode a great wallop togethers, and ever Sir Lancelot bled that it ran down to the earth. And so by fortune they came to an hermitage [which] was under a wood, and a great cliff on the other side, and a fair water running under it. And then Sir Lavayne beat on the gate with the butt of his spear, and cried fast,

‘Let in, for Jesu’s sake!’

And anon there came a fair child to them, and asked them what they would.

‘Fair son,’ said Sir Lavayne, ‘go and pray thy lord, the hermit, for God’s sake to let in here a knight that is full sore wounded. And this day tell thy lord, I saw him do more deeds of arms than ever I heard say that any man did.’

So the child went in lightly, and then he brought the hermit, which was a passing likely man. When Sir Lavayne saw him he prayed him for God’s sake of succour.

‘What knight is he?’ said the hermit. ‘Is he of the house of King Arthur, or not?’

‘I wot not,’ said Sir Lavayne, ‘what he is, nother what is his name, but well I wot I saw him do marvellously this day as of deeds of arms.’

‘On whose party was he?’ said the hermit.

‘Sir,’ said Sir Lavayne, ‘he was this day against King Arthur, and there he won the prize of all the knights of the Round Table.’

‘I have seen the day,’ said the hermit, ‘I would have loved him the worse by cause he was against my lord, King Arthur, for sometime I was one of the fellowship, but now I thank God I am otherwise disposed. But where is he? Let me see him.’

Then Sir Lavayne brought the hermit to him.

And when the hermit beheld him, as he sat leaning upon his saddle bow ever bleeding spiteously, and ever the knight hermit thought that he should know him, but he could not bring him to knowledge by cause he was so pale for bleeding.

'What knight are ye,' said the hermit, 'and where were ye born?'

'My fair lord,' said Sir Lancelot, 'I am a stranger and a knight adventurous, that laboureth throughout many realms for to win worship.'

Then the hermit advised him better, and saw by a wound on his cheek that he was Sir Lancelot.

'Alas,' said the hermit, 'mine own lord! Why layne you your name from me? Pardie, I ought to know you of right, for ye are the most noblest knight of the world. For well I know you for Sir Lancelot.'

'Sir,' said he, 'sith ye know me, help me an ye may, for God's sake! For I would be out of this pain at once; other to death other to life.'

'Have ye no doubt,' said the hermit, 'for ye shall live and fare right well.'

And so the hermit called to him two of his servants, and so they bare him into the hermitage, and lightly unarmed him, and laid him in his bed.

And then anon the hermit staunched his blood, and made him to drink good wine, that he was well revigoured and knew himself. For in these days it was not the guise as is nowadays, for there were none hermits in those days but that they had been men of worship and of prowess; and those hermits held great households, and refreshed people that were in distress.

Now turn we unto King Arthur, and leave we Sir Lancelot in the hermitage. So when the kings were together on both parties, and the great feast should be holden, King Arthur asked the King of North Galis and their fellowship, where was that knight that bare the red sleeve.

'Let bring him before me that he may have his laud, and honour, and the prize, as it is right.'

Then spake Sir Galahalt, the Haut Prince, and the King with the Hundred Knights:

'We suppose that knight is mischieved so that he is never like to see you nother none of us all. And that is the greatest pity that ever we wist of any knight.'

'Alas,' said King Arthur, 'how may this be? Is he so sore hurt? What is his name?' said King Arthur.

'Truly,' said they all, 'we know not his name, nother from whence he came, nother wither he would.'

'Alas,' said the king, 'this is the worst tidings that came to me this seven year! For I would not for all the lands I welde to know and wit it were so that that noble knight were slain.'

'Sir, know ye ought of him?' said they all.

'As for that,' said King Arthur, 'whether I know him other none, ye shall not know for me what man he is, but Almighty Jesu send me good tidings of him.'

And so said they all.

'By my head,' said Sir Gawayne, 'if it so be that the good knight be so sore hurt, it is great damage and pity to all this land, for he is one of the noblest knights that ever I saw in a field handle spear or sword. And if he may be found I shall find him, for I am sure he is not far from this country.'

'Sir, ye bear you well,' said King Arthur, 'an ye [may] find him, unless that he be in such a plight that he may not welde himself.'

'Jesu defend,' said Sir Gawayne. 'But wit well I shall know what he is, an I may find him.'

Right so Sir Gawayne took a squire with him upon hackneys, and rode all about Camelot within six or seven mile, but so he came again and could hear no word of him. Then within two days King Arthur and all the fellowship returned unto London again. And so as they rode by the way it happened Sir Gawayne at Astolat to lodge with Sir Barnard whereas was Sir Lancelot lodged.

And so as Sir Gawayne was in his chamber to repose him Sir Barnard, the old baron, came unto him, and his daughter Elaine, to cheer him and to ask him what tidings, and who did best at the tournament of Winchester.

'So God me help,' said Sir Gawayne, 'there were two knights that bare two white shields, but one of them bare a red sleeve upon his head, and certainly he was the best knight that ever I saw joust in field. For I dare say,' said Sir Gawayne, 'that one knight with the red sleeve smote down forty knights of the Round Table, and his fellow did right well and worshipfully.'

'Now blessed be God,' said this fair maiden of Astolat, 'that that knight sped so well! For he is the man in the world that I first loved, and truly he shall be last that ever I shall love.'

'Now, fair maiden,' said Sir Gawayne, 'is that good knight your love?'

'Certainly, sir,' said she, 'he is my love.'

'Then know ye his name?' said Sir Gawayne.

'Nay truly, sir,' said the damsel, 'I know not his name nother from

whence he came, but to say that I love him, I promise God and you I love him.'

'How had ye knowledge of him first?' said Sir Gawayne.

Then she told him, as ye have heard before, and how her father betook him her brother to do him service, and how her father lent him her brother's, Sir Tirry's, shield: 'and here with me he left his own shield.'

'For what cause did he so?' said Sir Gawayne.

'For this cause,' said the damsel, 'for his shield was full well known among many noble knights.'

'Ah, fair damsel,' said Sir Gawayne, 'please it you let me have a sight of that shield?'

'Sir,' said she, 'it is in my chamber, covered with a case, and if ye will come with me ye shall see it.'

'Not so,' said Sir Barnard to his daughter, 'but send ye for that shield.'

So when the shield was come, Sir Gawayne took off the case, and when he beheld that shield and knew it anon that it was Sir Lancelot's shield, and his own arms,

'Ah Jesu, mercy,' said Sir Gawayne, 'now is my heart more heavier than ever it was tofore.'

'Why?' said this maid Elaine.

'For I have a great cause,' said Sir Gawayne.

'Is that knight that oweth this shield your love?'

'Yea truly,' she said, 'my love is he. God would that I were his love.'

'So God me speed,' said Sir Gawayne, 'fair damsel, ye have right, for an he be your love ye love the most honourablest knight of the world, and the man of most worship.'

'So me thought ever,' said the damsel, 'for never ere that time, for no knight that ever I saw, loved I never none erst.'

'God grant,' said Sir Gawayne, 'that either of you may rejoice other, but that is in a great adventure.'

'But truly,' said Sir Gawayne unto the damsel, 'ye may say ye have a fair grace, for why I have known that noble knight this four and twenty year, and never or that day, I nor none other knight, I dare make good, saw never, nother heard say that ever he bare token or sign of no lady, gentlewoman, ne maiden, at no jousts nother tournament. And therefore, fair maiden, ye are much beholden to him to give him thank. But I dread me,' said Sir Gawayne, 'that ye shall never see him in this world, and that is as great pity as ever was of any earthly man.'

‘Alas,’ said she, ‘how may this be? Is he slain?’

‘I say not so,’ said Sir Gawayne, ‘but wit you well he is grievously wounded, by all manner of signs, and by means of sight more likelier to be dead than to be on live. And wit you well he is the noble knight, Sir Lancelot, for by this shield I know him.’

‘Alas,’ said this fair maiden of Astolat, ‘how may this be, and what was his hurt?’

‘Truly,’ said Sir Gawayne, ‘the man in the world that loved best him hurt him. And I dare say,’ said Sir Gawayne, ‘an that knight that hurt him knew the very certainty that he had hurt Sir Lancelot, it would be the most sorrow that ever came to his heart.’

‘Now fair father,’ said then Elaine, ‘I require you give me leave to ride and seek him, other else I wot well I shall go out of my mind. For I shall never stint till that I find him and my brother, Sir Lavayne.’

‘Do ye as it liketh you,’ said her father, ‘for me sore repents of the hurt of that noble knight.’

Right so the maid made her ready, and departed before Sir Gawayne, making great dole. Then on the morn Sir Gawayne came to King Arthur, and told him how he had found Sir Lancelot’s shield in the keeping of the fair maiden of Astolat.

‘All that knew I aforehand,’ said King Arthur, ‘and that caused me I would not suffer you to have ado at the great jousts; for I espied him when he came until his lodging full late in the evening into Astolat. But great marvel have I,’ said King Arthur, ‘that ever he would bear any sign of any damsel, for ere now I never heard say nor knew that ever he bare any token of none earthly woman.’

‘By my head, sir,’ said Sir Gawayne, ‘the fair maiden of Astolat loveth him marvellously well. What it meaneth I cannot say. And she is ridden after to seek him.’

So the king and all came to London, and there Gawayne all openly disclosed it to all the Court that it was Sir Lancelot that joustest best.

And when Sir Bors heard that, wit you well he was an heavy man, and so were all his kinsmen. But when the queen wist that it was Sir Lancelot that bare the red sleeve of the fair maiden of Astolat she was nigh out of her mind for wrath. And then she sent for Sir Bors de Ganis in all haste that might be. So when Sir Bors was come before the queen, she said,

‘Ah Sir Bors, have ye not heard say how falsely Sir Lancelot hath betrayed me?’

'Alas, madam,' said Sir Bors, 'I am afeared he hath betrayed himself and us all.'

'No force,' said the queen, 'though he be destroyed, for he is a false traitor knight.'

'Madam,' said Sir Bors, 'I pray you say ye no more so, for wit you well I may not hear no such language of him.'

'Why so, Sir Bors?' said she. 'Should I not call him traitor when he bare the red sleeve upon his head at Winchester, at the great jousts?'

'Madam,' said Sir Bors, 'that sleeve-bearing repents me, but I dare say he did bear it to none evil intent: but for this cause he bare the red sleeve that none of his blood should know him. For or then we nother none of us all never knew that ever he bare token or sign of maiden, lady, ne gentlewoman.'

'Fie on him,' said the queen. 'Yet for all his pride and bobbaunce there ye proved yourself better man than he.'

'Nay, madam, say ye never more so, for he beat me and my fellows, and might have slain us an he had would.'

'Fie on him,' said the queen. 'For I heard Sir Gawayne say before my lord Arthur that it were marvel to tell the great love that is between the fair maiden of Astolat and him.'

'Madam,' said Sir Bors, 'I may not warn Sir Gawayne to say what it pleased him; but I dare say, as for my lord, Sir Lancelot, that he loveth no lady, gentlewoman, nother maiden, but all he loveth inlike much. And therefore madam,' said Sir Bors, 'ye may say what ye will, but wit you well I will haste me to seek him, and find him wheresomever he be, and God send me good tidings of him.'

And so leave we them there, and speak we of Sir Lancelot that lay in great peril. And so as this fair maiden Elaine came to Winchester she sought there all about, and by fortune Sir Lavayne her brother was ridden to play him, to enchafe his horse. And anon as this maiden Elaine saw him she knew him, and then she cried on-loud till him, and when he heard her he came to her. And anon with that she asked her brother,

'How doth my lord, Sir Lancelot?'

'Who told you, sister, that my lord's name was Sir Lancelot?'

Then she told him how Sir Gawayne by his shield knew him.

So they rode together till that they came to the hermitage, and anon she alit. So Sir Lavayne brought her in to Sir Lancelot; and when she saw him lie so sick and pale in his bed she might not speak, but suddenly she fell to the earth down suddenly in a sowgh. And there she lay a great while. And when she was relieved, she shrieked and said,

'My lord, Sir Lancelot! Alas, why lie ye in this plight?'

And then she sowned again. And then Sir Lancelot prayed Sir Lavayne to take her up, 'And bring her hither to me.'

And when she came to herself Sir Lancelot lift her, and said,

'Fair maiden, why fare ye thus? for ye put me to more pain. Wherefore make ye no such cheer, for an ye be come to comfort me ye be right welcome; and of this little hurt that I have I shall be right hastily whole, by the grace of God. But I marvel,' said Sir Lancelot, 'who told you my name?'

And so this maiden told him all how Sir Gawayne was lodged with her father: 'And there by your shield he discovered your name.'

'Alas,' said Sir Lancelot, 'that repenteth me that my name is known, for I am sure it will turn until anger.'

And then Sir Lancelot compassed in his mind that Sir Gawayne would tell Queen Guinevere how he bare the red sleeve, and for whom; that he wist well would turn unto great anger.

So this maiden Elaine never went from Sir Lancelot, but watched him day and night, and did such attendance to him that, the French book saith, there was never woman did more kindlier for man. Then Sir Lancelot prayed Sir Lavayne to make espies in Winchester for Sir Bors if he came there, and told him by what tokens he should know him; by a wound in his forehead. 'For I am sure,' said Sir Lancelot, 'that Sir Bors will seek me, for he is the same good knight that hurt me.'

Now turn we unto Sir Bors de Ganis that came until Winchester to seek after his cousin Sir Lancelot. And when he came to Winchester Sir Lavayne laid watch for Sir Bors, and anon he had warning of him and so he found him, and anon he salued him and told him from whence he came. 'Now fair knight,' said Sir Bors, 'ye be welcome, and I require you that ye will bring me to my lord, Sir Lancelot.'

'Sir,' said Sir Lavayne, 'take your horse, and within this hour ye shall see him.'

So they departed, and came to the hermitage. And when Sir Bors saw Sir Lancelot lie in his bed dead pale and discoloured, anon Sir Bors lost his countenance, and for kindness and pity he might not speak, but wept tenderly a great while. But then when he might speak he said thus: 'Ah my lord, Sir Lancelot, God you bless, and send you hasty recovering. For full heavy am I of my misfortune and of mine unhappiness, for now I may call myself unhappy. And I dread me that God is greatly [displeased] with me, that he would suffer me to have such a shame for to

hurt you that are all our leader, and all our worship; and therefore I call myself unhappy. Alas that ever such a caitiff knight as I am should have power by unhappiness to hurt the most noblest knight of the world! Where I so shamefully set upon you and overcharged you, and where ye might have slain me, ye saved me; and so did not I, for I and all our blood did to you their utterance. I marvel,' said Sir Bors, 'that my heart or my blood would serve me. Wherefore my lord, Sir Lancelot, I ask you mercy.'

'Fair cousin,' said Sir Lancelot, 'ye be right welcome; and wit you well, overmuch ye say for the pleasure of me which pleaseth me nothing, for why I have the same sought; for I would with pride have overcome you all. And there in my pride I was near slain, and that was in mine own default; for I might have given you warning of my being there. And [then] had I had no hurt. For it is an old said saw, "there is hard battle there as kin and friends doth battle either against other, for there may be no mercy but mortal war." Therefore, fair cousin,' said Sir Lancelot, 'let this language overpass, and all shall be welcome that God sendeth; and let us leave off this matter and speak of some rejoicing, for this that is done may not be undone; and let us find a remedy how soon that I may be whole.'

Then Sir Bors leaned upon his bedside, and told Sir Lancelot how the queen was passing wroth with him, 'by cause he wore the red sleeve at the great jousts': and there Sir Bors told him all how Sir Gawayne discovered it: 'By your shield' that he left with the fair maiden of Astolat.

'Then is the queen wroth?' said Sir Lancelot. 'Therefore am I right heavy, but I deserved no wrath for all that I did was by cause I would not be known.'

'Sir, right so excused I you,' said Sir Bors, 'but all was in vain, for she said more largelier to me than [I] to you say now. But sir, is this she,' said Sir Bors, 'that is so busy about you, that men call the fair maiden of Astolat?'

'Forsooth, she it is,' said Sir Lancelot, 'that by no means I cannot put her from me.'

'Why should ye put her from you?' said Sir Bors, 'for she is a passing fair damsel, and well bisene, and well taught. And God would, fair cousin,' said Sir Bors, 'that ye could love her, but as to that I may not, nother dare not, counsel you. But I see well,' said Sir Bors, 'by her diligence about you that she loveth you entirely.'

'That me repents,' said Sir Lancelot.

'Well,' said Sir Bors, 'she is not the first that hath lost her pain upon

you, and that is the more pity.' And so they talked of many mo things. And so within three days or four Sir Lancelot waxed big and light.

Then Sir [Bors] told Sir [Lancelot] how there was sworn a great tournament betwixt King Arthur and the King of North Galis, that should be upon All Hallowmass Day, besides Winchester.

'Is that truth?' said Sir Lancelot. 'Then shall ye abide with me still a little while until that I be whole, for I feel myself reasonably right big and strong.'

'Blessed be God,' said Sir Bors.

Then were they there nigh a month together, and ever this maiden Elaine did ever her diligence and labour night and day unto Sir Lancelot, that there was never child nother wife more mecker till father and husband than was this fair maiden of Astolat; wherefore Sir Bors was greatly pleased with her.

So upon a day, by the assent of Sir Lavayne, Sir Bors, and Sir Lancelot, they made the hermit to seek in woods for divers herbs, and so Sir Lancelot made fair Elaine to gather herbs for him to make him a bain. So in the meanwhile Sir Lancelot made Sir Lavayne to arm him at all pieces; and there he thought to essay himself upon horseback with a spear, whether he might wield his armour and his spear for his hurt or not.

And so when he was upon his horse he stirred him fiercely, and the horse was passing lusty and fryck by cause he was not laboured of a month before. And then Sir Lancelot bade Sir Lavayne give him that great spear, and so Sir Lancelot couched that spear in the rest. The courser leapt mightily when he felt the spurs; and he that was upon him [which] was the noblest horse of the world, strained him mightily and stably, and kept still the spear in the rest. And therewith Sir Lancelot strained himself so straightly, with so great force, to get the courser forward, that the bottom of his wound brast both within and without; and therewithal the blood came out so fiercely that he felt himself so feeble that he might not sit upon his horse. And then Sir Lancelot cried unto Sir Bors,

'Ah, Sir Bors and Sir Lavayne, help! For I am come unto mine end.'

And therewith he fell down on the one side to the earth like a dead corse. And then Sir Bors and Sir Lavayne came unto him with sorrow-making out of measure. And so by fortune this maiden Elaine heard their mourning, and then she came; and when she found Sir Lancelot there armed in that place she cried and wept as she had been wood. And then she kissed him, and did what she might to awake him. And

then she rebuked her brother and Sir Bors, and called them false traitors, and said, 'Why would ye take him out of his bed? for an he die I will appel you of his death.'

And so with that came the hermit, Sir Baudwin of Bretayne, and when he found Sir Lancelot in that plight he said but little, but wit ye well he was wroth. But he said, 'Let us have him in.' And anon they bare him into the hermitage, and unarmed him, and laid him in his bed; and evermore his wound bled spiteously, but he stirred no limb of him. Then the knight hermit put a thing in his nose and a little deal of water in his mouth. And then Sir Lancelot waked of his swough. And then the hermit staunched his bleeding. And when Sir Lancelot might speak he asked why he put his life so in jeopardy.

'Sir,' said Sir Lancelot, 'by cause I weened I had been strong enough; and also Sir Bors told me that there should be at Hallowmass a great jousts betwixt King Arthur and the King of North Galis. And therefore I thought to essay myself, whether I might be there or not.'

'Ah, Sir Lancelot,' said the hermit, 'your heart and your courage will never be done until your last day! But ye shall do now by my counsel: let Sir Bors depart from you, and let him do at that tournament what he may: And by the grace of God,' said the knight hermit, 'by that the tournament be done and ye come hither again, sir, ye shall be whole, so that ye will [be] governed by me.'

Then Sir Bors made him ready to depart from him, and Sir Lancelot said,

'Fair cousin, Sir Bors, recommend me unto all those ye ought to recommend me unto. And I pray you, enforce yourself at that jousts that ye may be best, for my love. And here shall I abide you at the mercy of God till your again coming.'

And so Sir Bors departed and came to the court of King Arthur, and told them in what place he left Sir Lancelot.

'That me repents,' said the king. 'But syne he shall have his life we all thank God.'

And then Sir Bors told the queen what jeopardy Sir Lancelot was in when he would assayed his horse.

'And all that he did, was for the love of you, by cause he would have been at this tournament.'

'Fie on him, recreant knight,' said the queen. 'For wit you well I am right sorry an he shall have his life.'

'Madam, his life shall he have,' said Sir Bors, 'and who that would otherwise, except you, madam, we that been of his blood would help

to shorten their lives. But, madam,' said Sir Bors, 'ye have been oftentimes displeased with my lord, Sir Lancelot, but at all times at the end ye found him a true knight': and so he departed.

And then every knight of the Round Table that were there at that time present made them ready to that jousts at All Hallowmass. And thither drew many knights of divers countries. And as Hallowmass drew near, thither came the King of North Galis, and the King with the Hundred Knights, and Sir Galahalt, the Haut Prince, of Surluse. And thither came King Anguish of Ireland, and the King of Northumberland, and the King of Scots. So these three kings came to King Arthur's party.

And so that day Sir Gawayne did great deeds of arms, and began first: and the heralds numbered that Sir Gawayne smote down twenty knights. Then Sir Bors de Ganis came in the same time, and he was numbered that he smote down twenty knights; and therefore the prize was given betwixt them both, for they began first and longest endured. Also Sir Gareth, as the book saith, did that day great deeds of arms, for he smote down and pulled down thirty knights: but when he had done that deeds he tarried not but so departed, and therefore he lost his prize. And Sir Palomydes did great deeds of arms that day, for he smote down twenty knights; but he departed suddenly, and men deemed that he and Sir Gareth rode together to some manner adventures.

So when this tournament was done Sir Bors departed, and rode till he came to Sir Lancelot, his cousin; and then he found him walking on his feet, and there either made great joy of other.

And so he told Sir Lancelot of all the jousts, like as ye have heard.

'I marvel,' said Sir Lancelot, 'that Sir Gareth, when he had done such deeds of arms, that he would not tarry.'

'Sir, thereof we marvelled all,' said Sir Bors, 'for but if it were you, other the noble knight, Sir Tristram, other the good knight Sir Lamorak de Galis, I saw never knight bear knights and smite down so many in so little a while as did Sir Gareth. And anon as he was gone we all wist not where he become.'

'By my head,' said Sir Lancelot, 'he is a noble knight, and a mighty man and well breathed; and if he were well assayed,' said Sir Lancelot, 'I would deem he were good enough for any knight that beareth the life. And he is gentle, courteous and right bounteous, meek, and mild, and in him is no manner of mal engine, but plain, faithful, and true.'

So then they made them ready to depart from the hermitage. And so upon a morn they took their horses and this Elaine le Blanc with them. And when they came to Astolat there were they well lodged, and had

great cheer of Sir Barnard, the old baron, and of Sir Tirry, his son.

And so upon the morn when Sir Lancelot should depart, fair Elaine brought her father with her, and Sir Lavayne, and Sir Tirry, and then thus she said:

'My lord, Sir Lancelot, now I see ye will depart from me. Now, fair knight and courteous knight,' said she, 'have mercy upon me, and suffer me not to die for your love.'

'Why, what would ye that I did?' said Sir Lancelot.

'Sir, I would have you to my husband,' said Elaine.

'Fair damsel, I thank you heartily,' said Sir Lancelot, 'but truly,' said he, 'I cast me never to be wedded man.'

'Then, fair knight,' she said, 'will ye be my paramour?'

'Jesu defend me,' said Sir Lancelot. 'For then I rewarded your father and your brother full evil for their great goodness.'

'Alas, then,' said she, 'I must die for your love.'

'Ye shall not so,' said Sir Lancelot, 'for wit you well, fair maiden, I might have been married an I had would, but I never applied me yet to be married. But by cause, fair damsel, that ye love me as ye say ye do, I will for your good will and kindness show to you some goodness. That is this, that wheresomever ye will beset your heart upon some good knight that will wed you, I shall give you together a thousand pound yearly, to you and to your heirs. This much will I give you, fair madam, for your kindness, and always while I live to be your own knight.'

'Sir, of all this,' said the maiden, 'I will none, for but if ye will wed me, other to be my paramour at the least, wit you well, Sir Lancelot, my good days are done.'

'Fair damsel,' said Sir Lancelot, 'of these two things ye must pardon me.'

Then she shrieked shirly, and fell down in a sowgh; and then women bare her into her chamber, and there she made over much sorrow. And then Sir Lancelot would depart, and there he asked Sir Lavayne what he would do.

'Sir, what should I do,' said Sir Lavayne, 'but follow you, but if ye drive me from you, or command me to go from you.'

Then came Sir Barnard to Sir Lancelot and said to him,

'I cannot see but that my daughter will die for your sake.'

'Sir, I may not do withal,' said Sir Lancelot, 'for that me sore repenteth, for I report me to yourself, that my proffer is fair. And me repenteth,' said Sir Lancelot, 'that she loveth me as she doth; for I was never the causer of it, for I report me unto your son I early nother late proffered her bounty nother fair behests. And as for me,' said Sir

Lancelot, 'I dare do that a knight should do and say that she is a clean maiden for me, both for deed and will. For I am right heavy of her distress! For she is a full fair maiden, good and gentle, and well ytaught.'

'Father,' said Sir Lavayne, 'I dare make good she is a clean maiden as for my lord Sir Lancelot; but she doth as I do, for sithen I saw first my lord Sir Lancelot, I could never depart from him, nother nought I will, an I may follow him.'

Then Sir Lancelot took his leave, and so they departed, and came to Winchester. And when King Arthur wist that Sir Lancelot was come whole and sound, the king made great joy of him; and so did Sir Gawayne and all the knights of the Round Table, except Sir Agravayne and Sir Mordred. Also Queen Guinevere was wood wroth with Sir Lancelot, and would by no means speak with him, but enstranged herself from him. And Sir Lancelot made all the means that he might for to speak with the queen, but it would not be.

Now speak we of the fair maiden of Astolat that made such sorrow day and night that she never slept, ate, nother drank, and ever she made her complaint unto Sir Lancelot. So when she had thus endured a ten days, that she feebled so that she must needs pass out of this world, then she shrove her clean and received her Creator. And ever she complained still upon Sir Lancelot. Then her ghostly father bade her leave such thoughts. Then she said,

'Why should I leave such thoughts? Am I not an earthly woman? And all the while the breath is in my body I may complain me, for my belief is that I do none offence, though I love an earthly man unto God, for he formed me thereto, and all manner of good love cometh of God. And other than good love loved I never Sir Lancelot du Lake. And I take God to record I loved never none but him, nor never shall for earthly creature, and a clean maiden I am for him and for all other. And sithen it is the sufferance of God that I shall die for so noble a knight, I beseech thee, High Father of Heaven, have mercy upon me and my soul, and upon mine innumerable pains that I suffer may be allegiance of part of my sins. For sweet Lord Jesu,' said the fair maiden, 'I take God to record, I was never to Thee great offencer nother against thy laws; but that I loved this noble knight, Sir Lancelot, out of measure. And of myself, good Lord, I had no might to withstand the fervent love, wherefore I have my death.'

And then she called her father, Sir Barnard, and her brother, Sir Tirry, and heartily she prayed her father that her brother might write a letter like as she did indite: and so her father granted her. And when the letter was written word by word like as she devised it, then she

prayed her father that she might be watched until she were [dead]. 'And while my body is hot let this letter be put in my right hand, and my hand bound fast with the letter until that I be cold. And let me be put in a fair bed with all the richest clothes that I have about me, and so let my bed and all my richest clothes be laid with me in a chariot unto the next place where the Thames is; and there let me be put within a barget, and but one man with me, such as ye trust to steer me thither; and that my barget be covered with black samite over and over. And thus, father, I beseech you let it be done.'

So her father granted her faithfully all thing should be done like as she had devised. Then her father and her brother made great dole for her. And when this was done anon she died.

And when she was dead the corse and the bed all was led the next way unto the Thames, and there a man, and the corse, and all thing as she had devised was put in the Thames. And so the man steered the barget unto Westminster, and there it rubbed and rolled to and fro a great while or any man espied it.

So by fortune King Arthur and Queen Guinevere were talking together at a window, and so as they looked into Thames they espied that black barget, and had marvel what it meant. Then the king called Sir Kay, and showed it him.

'Sir,' said Sir Kay, 'wit you well there is some new tidings.'

'Therefore, go ye thither,' said the king to Sir Kay, 'and take with you Sir Braundiles and Sir Agravayne, and bring me ready word what is there.'

Then these three knights departed and came to the barget and went in. There they found the fairest corse lying in a rich bed that ever ye saw, and a poor man sitting in the barget's end, and no word would [he] speak. So these three knights returned unto the king again, and told him what they found.

'That fair corse will I see,' said the king.

And so the king took the queen by the hand, and went thither. Then the king made the barget to be hold fast, and then the king and the queen went in with certain knights with them; and there he saw the fairest woman lie in a rich bed, covered unto her middle with many rich clothes, and all was of cloth of gold. And she lay as she had smiled.

Then the queen espied the letter in her right hand, and told the king. Then the king took it and said,

'Now am I sure this letter will tell us what she was, and why she is come hither.'

So then the king and the queen went out of the barget, and so commanded a certain [man] to wait upon the barget. And so when the king was come to his chamber, he called many knights about him, and said that he would wit openly what was written within that letter. Then the king brake it, and made a clerk to read it, and this was the intent of the letter.

'Most noble knight, my lord Sir Lancelot, now hath death made us two at debate for your love. And I was your lover, that men called the fair maiden of Astolat. Therefore unto all ladies I make my moan, yet for my soul ye pray and bury me at the least and offer ye my mass-penny: this is my last request. And a clean maiden I died, I take God to witnes. And pray for my soul, Sir Lancelot, as thou art peerless.'

This was all the substance in the letter. And when it was read, the king, the queen, and all the knights wept for pity of the doleful complaints. Then was Sir Lancelot sent for; and when he was come King Arthur made the letter to be read to him. And when Sir Lancelot heard it word by word, he said,

'My lord Arthur, wit ye well I am right heavy of the death of this fair lady. And God knoweth I was never causer of her death by my willing, and that will I report me unto her own brother that here he is, Sir Lavayne. I will not say nay,' said Sir Lancelot, 'but that she was both fair and good, and much I was beholden unto her, but she loved me out of measure.'

'Sir,' said the queen, 'ye might have shewed her some bounty and gentleness which might have preserved her life.'

'Madam,' said Sir Lancelot, 'she would none other ways be answered but that she would be my wife other else my paramour; and of these two I would not grant her. But I proffered her, for her good love that she showed me, a thousand pound yearly to her, and to her heirs, and to wed any manner of knight that she could find best to love in her heart. For, madam,' said Sir Lancelot, 'I love not to be constrained to love; for love must only arise of the heartself; and not by none constraint.'

'That is truth, sir,' said the king, 'and with many knights, love is free in himself, and never will be bound, for where he is bounden he looseth himself.'

Then said the king unto Sir Lancelot, 'Sir, it will be your worship that ye oversee that she be interred worshipfully.'

'Sir,' said Sir Lancelot, 'that shall be done as I can best devise.'

And so many knights yode thither to behold that fair dead maiden. And so upon the morn she was interred richly. And Sir Lancelot offered

her mass-penny; and all those knights of the Table Round that were there at that time offered with Sir Lancelot. And then the poor man went again with the barget.

Then the queen sent for Sir Lancelot, and prayed him of mercy, for why that she had been wroth with him causeless.

'This is not the first time,' said Sir Lancelot, 'that ye have been displease with me causeless. But, madam, ever I must suffer you, but what sorrow that I endure ye I take no force.'

So this passed on all that winter, with all manner of hunting and hawking, and jousts and tourneys were many betwixt many great lords

. . .



SO at after Christmas King Arthur let call unto him many knights, and there they avised together to make a party and a great tournament and jousts. And the King of North Galis said to King Arthur he would have on his party King Anguish of Ireland and the King with the Hundred Knights and the King of Northumberland and Sir Galahalt the Haut Prince. So these four kings and this mighty duke took party against King Arthur and the knights of the Round Table.

And the cry was made that the day of jousts should be besides Westminster, upon Candlemass Day, whereof many knights were glad and made them ready to be at that jousts in the freshest manner.

Then Queen Guinevere [sent] for Sir Lancelot and said thus:

'I warn you that ye ride no more in no jousts nor tournaments but that your kinsmen may know you, and at this jousts that shall be ye



shall have of me a sleeve of gold. And I pray you for my sake to force yourself there, that men may speak you worship. But I charge you, as ye will have my love, that ye warn your kinsmen that ye will bear that day the sleeve of gold upon your helmet.'

'Madam,' said Sir Lancelot, 'it shall be done.'

And other made great joy of other. And when Sir Lancelot saw his time he told Sir Bors that he would depart, and no mo with him but Sir Lavayne, unto the good hermit that dwelled in the forest of Windsor, whose name was Sir Brastias. And there he thought to repose him and to take all the rest that he might, because he would be fresh at that day of jousts.

So Sir Lancelot and Sir Lavayne departed, that no creature wist where he was become but the noble men of his blood. And when he was come to the hermitage, wit you well he had great cheer. And so daily Sir Lancelot used to go to a well by the hermitage, and there he would lie down and see the well spring burble, and sometimes he slept there.

So at that time there was a lady that dwelled in that forest, and she was a great huntress, and daily she used to hunt. And ever she bare her bow with her, and no men went never with her, but always women, and they were all shooters and could well kill a deer at the stalk and at the treste. And they daily bare bows, arrows, horns and wood-knives, and many good dogs they had, both for the streng and for a bait.

So it happed the lady, the huntress, had abaited her dog for the bow at a barren hind, and so [this barren hind] took the flight over heaths and woods. And ever this lady and part of her women costed the hind, and checked it by the noise of the hound to have met with the hind at some water. And so it happened that that hind came to the same well thereas Sir Lancelot was by that well sleeping and slumbering.

And so the hind, when she came to the well, for heat she went to soil, and there she lay a great while and the dog came after and unbecast about, for she had lost the very perfect fewt of the hind. Right so came that lady, the huntress, that knew by her dog that the hind was at the soil by the well, and thither she came straight and found the hind. And anon as she had spied him she put a broad arrow in her bow and shot at the hind, and so she overshot the hind, and so by misfortune the arrow smote Sir Lancelot in the thick of the buttock over the barbs.

When Sir Lancelot felt him so hurt he whorled up woodly, and saw the lady that had smitten him. And when he knew she was a woman he said thus:

'Lady or damsel, whatsomever ye be, in an evil time bare ye this bow! The devil made you a shooter!'

'Now, mercy, fair sir!' said the lady, 'I am a gentlewoman that useth here in this forest hunting, and God knoweth I saw you not but as here was a barren hind at the soil in this well. And I weened I had done well, but my hand swerved.'

'Alas,' said Sir Lancelot, 'ye have mischieved me.'

And so the lady departed. And Sir Lancelot, as he might, pulled out the arrow and left the head still in his buttock, and so he went weakly into the hermitage, ever more bleeding as he went. And when Sir Lavayne and the hermit espied that Sir Lancelot was so sore hurt, wit you well they were passing heavy. But Sir Lavayne wist not how that he was hurt nother by whom. And then were they wroth out of measure. And so with great pain the hermit got out the arrow-head out of Sir Lancelot's buttock, and much of his blood he shed; and the wound was now passing sore and unhappily smitten, for it was on such a place that he might not sit in no saddle.

'Ah, mercy Jesu!' said Sir Lancelot, 'I may call myself the most unhappy man that liveth, for ever when I would have faintest worship there befalleth me ever some unhappy thing. Now, so Jesu me help,' said Sir Lancelot, 'and if no man would but God, I shall be in the field at Candlemass Day at the jousts, whatsomever fall of it.'

So all that might be gotten to heal Sir Lancelot was had. So when the day was come Sir Lancelot let devise that he was arrayed, and Sir Lavayne and he and their horses, as they had been Saracens. And so they departed and came nigh to the field.

So the King of North Galis he had a hundred knights with him, and the King of Northumberland brought with him an hundred good knights, and King Anguish of Ireland brought with him an hundred good knights ready to joust. And Sir Galahalt the Haut Prince brought with him an hundred good knights, and the King with the Hundred Knights brought with him as many, and all there were proved good knights.

Then came in King Arthur's party, and in came with him the King of Scots, and an hundred knights with him, and King Uryence of Gore brought with him an hundred knights and King Howell of Bretayne he brought with him an hundred knights, and Duke Chalence of Claraunce brought with him an hundred knights. And King Arthur himself came into the field with two hundred knights, and the most party were knights of the Round Table that were all proved noble men. And there were old knights set on scaffolds for to judge with the queen who did best.

Then they blew unto the field. And there the King of North Galis encountered with the King of Scots, and there the King of Scots had a fall; and the King of Ireland smote down King Uryence, and the King of Northumberland smote down King Howell of Bretayne and Sir Galahalt the Haut Prince smote down Duke Chalence of Claraunce. And then King Arthur was wood wroth, and ran to the King with the Hundred Knights, and so King Arthur smote him down. And after with that same spear he smote down other three knights and then his spear brake, and did passingly well.

So therewith came in Sir Gawayne and Sir Gaheris, Sir Agravayne and Sir Mordred, and there every of them smote down a knight and Sir Gawayne smote down four knights. And then there began a great medley, for then came in the knights of Sir Lancelot's blood and Sir Gareth and Sir Palomydes with them, and many knights of the Round Table; and they began to hold the four kings and the mighty duke so hard that they were nigh discomfit. Bu this Sir Galahalt the Haut Prince was a noble knight and by his mighty prowess of arms he held the knights of the Round Table strait.

So all this doing saw Sir Lancelot, and then he came into the field with Sir Lavayne with him, as i had been thunder. And then anon Sir Bors and the knights of his blood espied Sir Lancelot anon and said unto them all,

'I warn you, beware of him with the sleeve of gold upon his head for he is himself my lord Sir Lancelot.'

And for great goodness Sir Bors warned Sir Gareth.

'Sir, I am well paid,' said Sir Gareth, 'that I may know him.'

'But who is he,' said they all, 'that rideth with him in the same array?'

'Sir, that is the good and gentle knight Sir Lavayne,' said Sir Bors.

So Sir Lancelot encountered with ~~the~~ ^{his} dog came after there by fence Sir Lancelot smote down ~~the~~ ^{down} Sir Gawayne and ~~the~~ ^{dog} that the hals he smote down Sir Mordred, and all this was with one spear and so fiercely met with Sir Palomydes, and either met other so ~~that~~ ^{so} that both their horses fell to the earth. And then were ~~the~~ ^{the} Sir Palomydes had a fall. And so Sir Lancelot, or ever he slights of his blood were knights of the Round Table. And ever the ~~the~~ ^{where} Sir Lancelot withdrew them and made them ado in other places.

And then King Arthur was wroth when he saw Sir Lancelot do such deeds, and then the king called unto him Sir Gawayne, Sir Gaheris, Sir Agravayne, Sir Mordred, Sir Kay, Sir Gryfflet, Sir Lucan de Butler, Sir Bedyvere, Sir Palomydes and Sir Safer, his brother. And so the king with these nine knights made them ready to set upon Sir Lancelot and upon Sir Lavayne.

And all this espied Sir Bors and Sir Gareth.

'Now I dread me sore,' said Sir Bors, 'that my lord Sir Lancelot will be hard matched.'

'Now, by my head,' said Sir Gareth, 'I will ride unto my lord Sir Lancelot for to help him whatsoever me betide. For he is the same man that made me knight.'

'Sir, ye shall not do so,' said Sir Bors, 'by my counsel, unless that ye were disguised.'

'Sir, ye shall see me soon disguised,' said Sir Gareth.

And therewithal he had espied a Welsh knight where he was to repose him, for he was sore hurt before of Sir Gawayne. And unto him Sir Gareth rode and prayed him of his knighthood to lend him his shield for his.

And when Sir Gareth had his shield—the book saith he was green, with a maiden which seemed in it—then Sir Gareth came driving unto Sir Lancelot all that ever he might, and said,

'Sir knight, take keep to thyself, for yonder cometh King Arthur with nine noble knights with him, to put you to a rebuke. And so I am come to bear you fellowship for the old love you have showed unto me.'

'Gramercy,' said Sir Lancelot.

'But, sir,' said Sir Gareth, 'encounter ye with Sir Gawayne, and I shall encounter with Sir Palomydes, and let Sir Lavayne match with the noble King Arthur. And when we have delivered them let us three hold sadly together.'

So then came in King Arthur with his nine knights with him, and Sir Lancelot encountered with Sir Gawayne and gave him such a buffet that the arson of his saddle brast, and Sir Gawayne fell to the earth. Then Sir Gareth encountered with Sir Palomydes, and he gave him such a buffet that both his horse and he dashed to the earth. Then encountered King Arthur with Sir Lavayne, and there either of them smote other to the earth, horse and all, that they lay both a great while.

Then Sir Lancelot smote down Sir Agravay neand Sir Gaheris and Sir Mordred; and Sir Gareth smote down Sir Kay, Sir Safer and Sir Gryfflet.

And then Sir Lavayne was horsed again, and he smote down Sir Lucan de Butler and Sir Bedyvere, and then there began great throng of good knights. Then Sir Lancelot hurled here and there, and raced and pulled off helms, that at that time there might none sit him a buffet with spear nother with sword.

And Sir Gareth did such deeds of arms that all men marvelled what knight he was with the green shield, for he smote down that day and pulled down mo than thirty knights. And, as the French book saith, Sir Lancelot marvelled, when he beheld Sir Gareth do such deeds, what knight he might be. And Sir Lavayne smote and pulled down mo than twenty knights. And yet, for all this, Sir Lancelot knew not Sir Gareth; for an Sir Tristram de Lyones other Sir Lamorak de Galis had been on live, Sir Lancelot would have deemed he had been one of them twain.

So ever as Sir Lancelot, Sir Gareth and Sir Lavayne fought on the one side, Sir Bors, Sir Ector de Maris, Sir Lionel, Sir Bleoberis, Sir Galyhud and Sir Pelleas and many mo other of King Bân's blood fought upon another party and held the King with the Hundred Knights and the King of Northumberland right strait.

So this tournament and jousts dured long till it was near night, for the knights of the Round Table relieved ever unto King Arthur; for the King was wroth out of measure that he and his knights might not prevail that day. Then said Sir Gawayne to the King,

'Sir, I marvel where are all this day Sir Bors de Ganis and his fellowship of Sir Lancelot's blood, that of all this day they be not about you. And therefore I deem it is for some cause,' said Sir Gawayne.

'By my head,' said Sir Kay, 'Sir Bors is yonder all this day upon the right hand of this field, and there he and his blood do more worshipfully than we do.'

'It may well be,' said Sir Gawayne, 'but I dread me ever of guile. For on pain of my life that same knight with the red sleeve of gold is himself Sir Lancelot, for I see well by his riding and by his great strokes. And the other knight in the same colours is the good young knight Sir Lavayne, and that knight with the green shield is my brother Sir Gareth, and yet he hath disguised himself, for no man shall make him be against Sir Lancelot, because he made him knight.'

'By my head,' said King Arthur, 'nephew, I believe you. And therefore now tell me what is your best counsel.'

'Sir,' said Sir Gawayne, 'my counsel is to blow unto lodging. For an he be Sir Lancelot du Lake and my brother Sir Gareth with him, with the help of that good young knight, Sir Lavayne, trust me truly,

it will be no boot to strive with them but if we should fall ten or twelve upon one knight, and that were no worship, but shame.'

'Ye say truth,' said the king, 'it were shame for us, so many as we be, to set upon them any more. For wit you well,' said King Arthur, 'they be three good knights, and namely that knight with the sleeve of gold.'

And anon they blew unto lodging, but forthwithal King Arthur let send unto the four kings and to the mighty duke, and prayed them that the knight with the sleeve of gold depart not from them but that the king may speak with him. Then forthwithal King Arthur alight and unarmed him, and took a little hackney and rode after Sir Lancelot, for ever he had a spy upon him. And so he found him among the four kings and the duke, and there the king prayed them all unto supper and they said they would with good will. And when they were unarmed King Arthur knew Sir Lancelot, Sir Gareth and Sir Lavayne.

'Ah, Sir Lancelot,' said King Arthur, 'this day ye have heated me and my knights!'

And so they yode unto King Arthur's lodging all together, and there was a great feast and great revel. And the prize was given unto Sir Lancelot, for by heralds they named him that he had smitten down fifty knights, and Sir Gareth five-and-thirty knights, and Sir Lavayne four-and-twenty.

Then Sir Lancelot told the king and the queen how the lady huntress shot him in the forest of Windsor in the buttock with a broad arrow and how the wound was at that time six inches deep and inlike long.

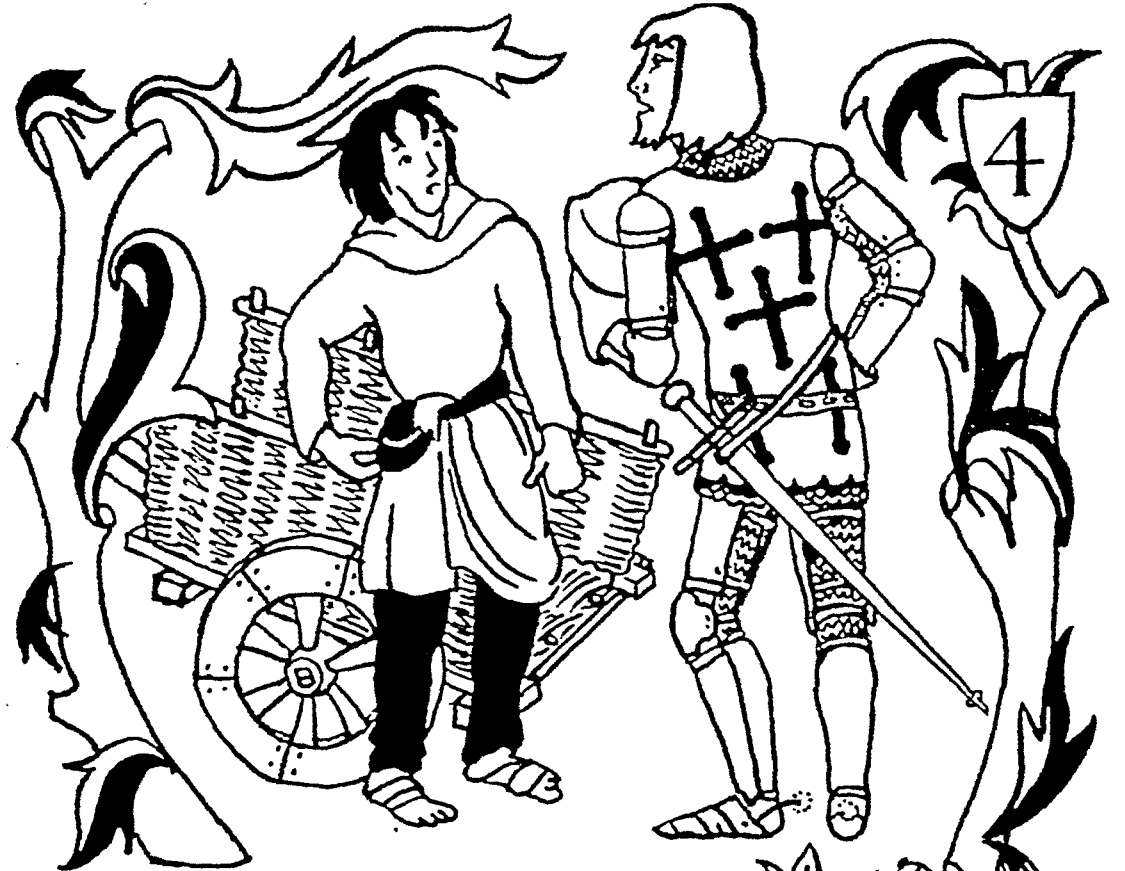
Also King Arthur blamed Sir Gareth because he left his fellowship and held with Sir Lancelot.

'My lord,' said Sir Gareth, 'he made me knight, and when I saw him so hard bested methought it was my worship to help him. For I saw him do so much deeds of arms, and so many noble knights against him, that when I understood that he was Sir Lancelot du Lake I shamed to see so many good knights against him alone.'

'Now truly,' said King Arthur unto Sir Gareth, 'ye say well, and worshipfully have ye done, and to yourself great worship. And all the days of my life,' said King Arthur unto Sir Gareth, 'wit you well I shall love you and trust you the more better. For ever it is,' said King Arthur, 'a worshipful knight's deed to help and succour another worshipful knight when he seeth him in danger. For ever a worshipful man will be loth to see a worshipful man shamed, and he that is of no worship and meddleth with cowardice never shall he show gentleness nor no manner of goodness where he seeth a man in danger, for then

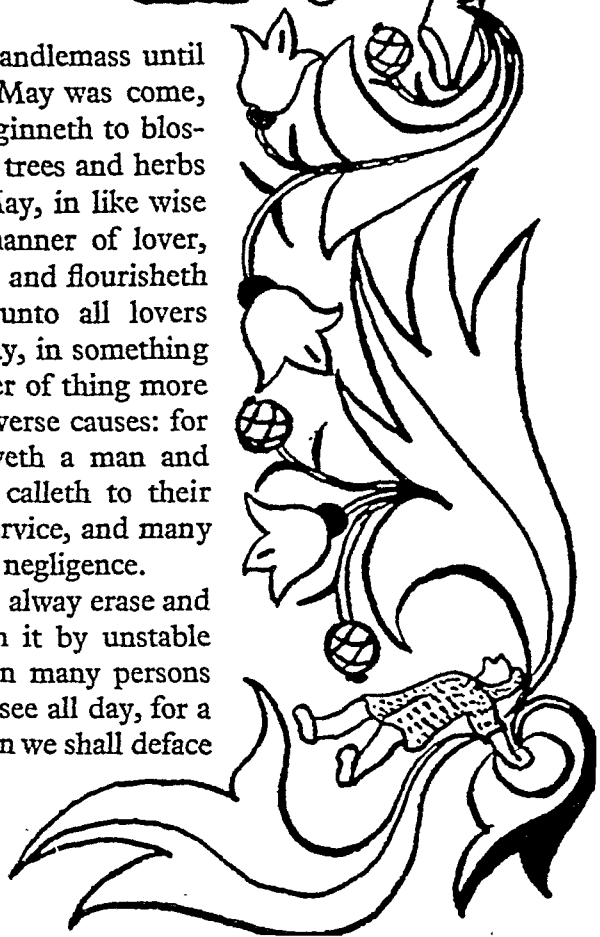
will a coward never show mercy. And always a good man will do ever to another man as he would be done to himself.'

So then there were made great feasts unto kings and dukes, and revel, game and play, and all manner of nobleness was used. And he that was courteous, true, and faithful to his friend was that time cherished.



AND thus it passed on from Candlemass until Easter, that the month of May was come, when every lusty heart beginneth to blossom, and to burgeon; for like as trees and herbs burgeoneth and flourisheth in May, in like wise every lusty heart that is any manner of lover, springeth, burgeoneth, buddeth, and flourisheth in lusty deeds. For it giveth unto all lovers courage, that lusty month of May, in something to constrain him to some manner of thing more than in any other month, for diverse causes: for then all herbs and trees reneweth a man and woman, and in likewise lovers calleth to their mind old gentleness and old service, and many kind deeds that was forgotten by negligence.

For like as winter rasure doth alway erase and deface green summer, so fareth it by unstable love in man and woman. For in many persons there is no stability; for we may see all day, for a little blast of winter's rasure, anon we shall deface



and lay apart true love for little or nought, that cost much thing. This is no wisdom nother no stability, but it is feebleness of nature and great disworship, whomsomever useth this.

Therefore, like as May month flowereth and flourisheth in every man's garden, so in likewise let every man of worship flourish his heart in this world; first unto God, and next unto the joy of them that he promised his faith unto; for there was never worshipful man nor worshipful woman, but they loved one better than another; and worship in arms may never be foiled. But first reserve the honour to God, and secondly thy quarrel must come of thy lady: and such love I call virtuous love.

But nowadays men can not love seven night but they must have all their desires. That love may not endure by reason; for where they be soon accorded, and hasty, heat soon cooleth. And right so fareth the love nowadays; soon hot, soon cold. This is no stability. But the old love was not so; for men and women could love together seven years, and no lycours lusts was betwixt them, and then was love, truth, and faithfulness. And so in likewise was used such love in King Arthur's days.

Wherefore I liken love nowadays unto summer and winter: for, like as the one is cold and the other is hot, so fareth love nowadays. Therefore all ye that be lovers call unto your remembrance the month of May, like as did Queen Guinevere, for whom I make here a little mention, that while she lived she was a true lover, and therefore she had a good end.

So it befell in the month of May, Queen Guinevere called unto her ten knights of the Table Round; and she gave them warning that early upon the morn she would ride on maying into woods and fields besides Westminster.

'And I warn you that there be none of you but he be well horsed, and that ye all be clothed all in green, either in silk other in cloth. And I shall bring with me ten ladies, and every knight shall have a lady by him. And every knight shall have a squire and two yeomen; and I will that all be well horsed.'

So they made them ready in the freshest manner. And these were the names of the knights: Sir Kay le Seneschal, Sir Agravayne, Sir Braundiles, Sir Sagramore le Desirous, Sir Dodynas le Savage, Sir Ozanna le Cure Hardy, Sir Ladynas of the Forest Savage, Sir Parsaunt of Inde, Sir Ironside, that was called the Knight of the Red Lands, and Sir Pelleas, the lover. And these ten knights made them ready in the freshest manner to ride with the queen.

And so upon the morn, ere it were day, in a May morning, they took their horses with the queen, and rode on maying in woods and meadows as it pleased them, in great joy and delights. For the queen had cast to have been again with King Arthur at the furthest by ten of the clock, and so was that time her purpose.

Then there was a knight which hight Sir Mellyagaunce, and he was son unto King Bagdemagus, and this knight had that time a castle of the gift of King Arthur within seven mile of Westminster. And this knight, Sir Mellyagaunce, loved passingly well Queen Guinevere, and so had he done long and many years. And the book saith he had lain in await for to steal away the queen, but evermore he forbare for by cause of Sir Lancelot; for in no wise he would meddle with the queen an Sir Lancelot were in her company, other else an he were near hand.

And that time was such a custom that the queen rode never without a great fellowship of men of arms about her, and they were many good knights, and the most party were young men that would have worship; and they were called the Queen's Knights, and never in no battle, tournament, nother jousts, they bare none of them no manner of knowledge of their own arms, but plain white shields, and thereby they were called the Queen's Knights. And when it happed any of them to be of great worship by his noble deeds, then at the next Feast of Pentecost, if there were any slain or dead (as there was none year that there failed but there were some were dead) then was there chosen in his stead that was dead, the most men of worship that were called the Queen's Knights. And thus they came up first, or they were renowned men of worship, both Sir Lancelot and all the remnant of them.

But this knight, Sir Mellyagaunce, had espied the queen well and her purpose, and how Sir Lancelot was not with her, and how she had no men of arms with her but the ten noble knights all arrayed in green for maying. Then he purveyed him a twenty men of arms and an hundred archers for to distress the queen and her knights, for he thought that time was best season to take the queen.

So as [the queen] was out on maying with all her knights, which were bedashed with herbs, mosses and flowers, in the freshest manner. Right so there came out of a wood Sir Mellyagaunce with an eight score men all harnessed as they should fight in a battle of arrest, and bade the queen and her knights abide, for maugre their heads they should abide.

'Traitor knight,' said Queen Guinevere, 'what cast thou to do? Wilt thou shame thyself? Bethink thee how thou art a king's son, and a

knight of the Table Round, and thou thus to be about to dishonour the noble king that made thee knight! Thou shamest all knighthood and thyself, and me. And I let thee wit shalt thou never shame me, for I had lever cut mine own throat in twain rather than thou should dishonour me!

‘As for all this language,’ said Sir Mellyagaunce, ‘be as it be may, for wit you well, madam, I have loved you many a year, and never ere now could I get you at such avail, and therefore I will take you as I find you.’

Then spake all the ten noble knights at once and said, ‘Sir Mellyagaunce, wit thou well thou art about to jeopardy your worship to dishonour, and also ye cast to jeopardy your persons. Howbeit, we be unarmed, and ye have us at a great advantage, for it seemeth by you that ye have laid watch upon us, but rather than ye should put the queen to a shame and us all, we had as lief to depart from our lives, for an we other ways did, we were shamed for ever.’

Then said Sir Mellyagaunce: ‘Dress you as well ye can, and keep the queen.’

Then the ten knights of the Round Table drew their swords, and these other let run at them with their spears, and the ten knights manly abode them, and smote away their spears that no spear did them no harm. Then they lashed together with swords, and anon Sir Kay, Sir Sagramore, Sir Agravayne, Sir Dodynas, Sir Ladynas, and Sir Ozanna were smitten to the earth with grimly wounds. Then Sir Braundiles, and Sir Parsaunt, Sir Ironside and Sir Pelleas fought long, and they were sore wounded, for these ten knights, or ever they were laid to the ground, slew forty men of the boldest and the best of them.

So when the queen saw her knights thus dolefully wounded, and needs must be slain at the last, then for very pity and sorrow she cried and said,

‘Sir Mellyagaunce, slay not my noble knights, and I will go with thee upon this covenant: that thou save them and suffer them no more to be hurt, with this that they be led with me wheresomever thou leadest me. For I will rather slay myself than I will go with thee, unless that these noble knights may be in my presence.’

‘Madam,’ said Sir Mellyagaunce, ‘for your sake they shall be led with you into mine own castle, with that ye will be ruled, and ride with me.’

Then the queen prayed the four knights to leave their fighting, and she and they would not depart.

‘Madam,’ said Sir Pelleas, ‘we will do as ye do, for as for me I take no force of my life nor death.’

For, as the French book saith, Sir Pelleas gave such buffets there that none armour might hold him.

Then by the queen's commandment they left battle, and dressed the wounded knights on horseback, some sitting, and some overthwart their horses, that it was pity to behold. And then Sir Mellyagaunce charged the queen and all her knights that none of all her fellowship should depart from her; for full sore he dread Sir Lancelot du Lake, lest he should have any knowledging. And all this espied the queen, and privily she called unto her a child of her chamber which was swiftly horsed of a great advantage.

'Now, go thou,' said she, 'when thou seest thy time, and bear this ring unto Sir Lancelot du Lake, and pray him as he loveth me that he will see me and rescue me, if ever he will have joy of me. And spare not thy horse,' said the queen, 'nother for water, nother for land.'

So the child espied his time, and lightly he took his horse with spurs, and departed as fast he might. And when Sir Mellyagaunce saw him so flee, he understood that it was by the queen's commandment for to warn Sir Lancelot. Then they that were best horsed chased him and shot at him, but from them all the child went deliverly.

And then Sir Mellyagaunce said unto the queen, 'Madam, ye are about to betray me, but I shall ordain for Sir Lancelot that he shall not come lightly at you.'

And then he rode with her, and all the fellowship in all the haste that they might. And so by the way Sir Mellyagaunce laid in bushment of the best archers that he [might get in his country, to the number] of a thirty, to await upon Sir Lancelot, charging them if they saw such a manner a knight come by the way upon a white horse, 'that in any wise ye slay his horse, but in no manner have ye ado with him bodily, for he is over-hardy to be overcome.' So this was done, and they were come to his castle; but in no wise the queen would never let none of the ten knights and her ladies out of her sight, but always they were in her presence. For the book saith, Sir Mellyagaunce durst make no masteries, for dread of Sir Lancelot, insomuch he deemed that he had warning.

So when the child was departed fro the fellowship of Sir Mellyagaunce, within a while [he] came to Westminster, and anon he found Sir Lancelot. And when he had told his message, and delivered him the queen's ring: 'Alas,' said Sir Lancelot, 'now am I shamed for ever, unless that I may rescue that noble lady from dishonour.' Then eagerly he asked his arms.

And ever the child told Sir Lancelot how the ten knights fought marvellously, and how Sir Pelleas, and Sir Ironside, and Sir Braundiles, and Sir Parsaunt of Inde, fought strongly, but namely Sir Pelleas, there might none harness hold him; and how they all fought till they were laid to the [earth]; and how the queen made appointment for to save their lives, and to go with Sir Mellyagaunce.

‘Alas,’ said Sir Lancelot, ‘that most noble lady, that she should be so destroyed! I had lever,’ said Sir Lancelot, ‘than all France, that I had been there well armed.’

So when Sir Lancelot was armed and upon his horse, he prayed the child of the queen’s chamber to warn Sir Lavayne how suddenly he was departed, and for what cause. ‘And pray him as he loveth me, that he will hie him after me, and that he stint not until he come to the castle where Sir Mellyagaunce abideth. For there,’ said Sir Lancelot, ‘he shall hear of me an I be a man living!’

Then Sir Lancelot rode as fast he might, and the book saith he took the water at Westminster Bridge, and made his horse swim over the Thames unto Lambeth. And so within a while he came to that same place thereas the ten noble knights fought with Sir Mellyagaunce.

And then Sir Lancelot followed the track until that he came to a wood, and there was a straight way, and there the thirty archers bade Sir Lancelot ‘Turn again, and follow no longer that track.’

‘What commandment have ye,’ said Sir Lancelot, ‘to cause me that am a knight of the Round Table to leave my right way?’

‘This way shalt thou leave, otherelse thou shalt go it on thy foot, for wit thou well thy horse shall be slain.’

‘That is little mastery,’ said Sir Lancelot, ‘to slay mine horse! But as for myself, when my horse is slain, I give right nought of you, not an ye were five hundred mo!’

So then they shot Sir Lancelot’s horse, and smote him with many arrows. And then Sir Lancelot avoided his horse, and went on foot. But there were so many ditches and hedges betwixt them and him that he might not meddle with none of them.

‘Alas for shame,’ said Sir Lancelot, ‘that ever one knight should betray another knight; but it is an old said saw, “A good man is never in danger but when he is in the danger of a coward”.’

Then Sir Lancelot walked on a while, and was sore acumbered of his armour, his shield, and his spear. Wit you well he was full sore annoyed! And full loath he was for to leave anything that longed unto him, for he dread sore the treason of Sir Mellyagaunce.

Then by fortune there came [by him] a chariot that came thither to fetch wood.

'Say me, carter,' said Sir Lancelot, 'what shall I give thee to suffer me to leap into thy chariot, and that thou bring me unto a castle within this two mile?'

'Thou shalt not enter into this chariot,' said the carter, 'for I am sent for to fetch wood.'

'Unto whom?' said Sir Lancelot.

'Unto my lord, Sir Mellyagaunce,' said the carter.

'And with him would I speak,' said Sir Lancelot.

'Thou shalt not go with me,' said the carter.

When Sir Lancelot leapt to him, and gave him with his gauntlet a rearmain that he fell to the earth stark dead. Then the tother carter, his fellow, was afeared, and weened to have gone the same way. And then he said,

'Fair lord, save my life, and I shall bring you where ye will.'

'Then I charge thee,' said Sir Lancelot, 'that thou drive me and this chariot unto Sir Mellyagaunce's gate.'

'Then leap ye up into the chariot,' said the carter, 'and ye shall be there anon.'

So the carter drove on a great wallop, and Sir Lancelot's horse followed the chariot with mo than forty arrows in him.

And more than an hour and an half Queen Guinevere was awaiting in a bay window. Then one of her ladies espied an armed knight standing in a chariot.

'Ah, see, madam,' said the lady, 'where rides in a chariot a goodly armed knight, and we suppose he rideth unto hanging.'

'Where?' said the queen. Then she espied by his shield that it was Sir Lancelot. And then was she ware where came his horse ever after the chariot, and ever he trod his guts and his paunch under his feet.

'Alas,' said the queen, 'now I may prove and see that well is that creature that hath a trusty friend. A ha!' said Queen Guinevere, 'that ye were hard bestead when ye ride in a chariot.'

And then she rebuked that lady that likened Sir Lancelot to ride in a chariot to hanging: 'Forsooth, it was foul mouthed,' said the queen, 'and evil likened, so for to liken the most noble knight of the world unto such a shameful death. Ah, Jesu defend him and keep him!' said the queen, 'from all mischievous end!'

So by this was Sir Lancelot comen to the gates of that castle, and there he descended down, and cried, that all the castle might ring: 'Where art thou, thou false traitor, Sir Mellyagaunce, and knight of the

Table Round? Come forth, thou traitor knight, thou and all thy fellowship with thee; for here I am, Sir Lancelot du Lake, that shall fight with you all!

And therewithal he bare the gate wide open upon the porter, and smote him under the ear with his gauntlet, that his neck brast in two pieces.

When Sir Mellyyagaunce heard that Sir Lancelot was comen he ran unto the Queen, and fell upon his knee, and said: 'Mercy, madam, for now I put me wholly in your grace.'

'What aileth you now?' said Queen Guinevere. 'Pardie, I might well wit that some good knight would revenge me though my lord King Arthur knew not of this your work.'

'Ah, madam,' said Sir Mellyyagaunce, 'all this that is amiss on my party shall be amended right as yourself will devise, and wholly I put me in your grace.'

'What would ye that I did?' said the queen.

'Madam, I would no more,' said Sir Mellyyagaunce, 'but that ye would take all in your own hands, and that ye will rule my lord Sir Lancelot. And such cheer as may be made him in this poor castle, ye and he shall have until to-morn, and then may ye and all they return unto again Westminster. And my body and all that I have I shall put in your rule.'

'Ye say well,' said the queen, 'and better is peace than ever more war, and the less noise the more is my worship.'

Then the queen and her ladies went down unto the knight, Sir Lancelot, that stood wood wroth out of measure, to abide battle; and ever he said: 'Thou traitor knight, come forth!' Then the queen came unto him and said, 'Ah, Sir Lancelot, why be ye so amoved?'

'Ha, madam,' said Sir Lancelot, 'why ask ye me that question? For meseemeth, ye ought to be more wrother than I am, for ye have the hurt and the dishonour. For wit you well, madam, my hurt is but little in regard for the slaying of a mare's son, but the despite grieveth me much more than all my hurt.'

'Truly,' said the queen, 'ye say truth, but heartily I thank you,' said the queen. 'But ye must come in with me peaceably, for all thing is put in mine hand, and all that is amiss shall be amended, for the knight full sore repents him of this misadventure that is befallen him.'

'Madam,' said Sir Lancelot, 'sith it is so that ye be accorded with him, as for me I may not gainsay it. Howbeit Sir Mellyyagaunce hath done full shamefully to me and cowardly. And madam,' said Sir Lance-

lot, 'an I had wist ye would have been so lightly accorded with him I would not a made such haste unto you.'

'Why say ye so?' said the queen. 'Do ye forthink yourself of your good deeds? Wit you well,' said the queen, 'I accorded never with him for no favour nor love that I had unto him, but of every shameful noise of wisdom to lay adown.'

'Madam,' said Sir Lancelot, 'ye understand full well I was never willing nor glad of shameful slander nor noise. And there is nother king, queen, ne knight, that beareth the life, except my lord King Arthur, and you, madam, that should let me, but I should make Sir Mellyagaunce's heart full cold or ever I departed from hence.'

'That wot I well,' said the queen, 'but what will ye more? Ye shall have all thing ruled as ye list to have it.'

'Madam,' said Sir Lancelot, 'so ye be pleased, as for my part ye shall soon please me.'

Right so the queen took Sir Lancelot by the bare hand, for he had put off his gauntlet, and so she went with him till her chamber; and then she commanded him to be unarmed.

And then Sir Lancelot asked the queen where were the ten knights that were wounded with her; then she showed them unto him, and there they made great joy of the coming of him, and he made great sorrow of their hurts. And there Sir Lancelot told them how cowardly and traitorly he set archers to slay his horse, and how he was fain to put himself in a chariot. And thus they complained every each to other; and full fain they would have been revenged, but they kept the peace by cause of the queen.

Then, as the French book saith, Sir Lancelot was called many days after le Chevalier de Chariot, and so he did many deeds and great adventures.

And so we leave off here of le Chevalier de Chariot, and turn we to this tale.

Sir Lancelot had great cheer with the queen. And then he made a promise with the queen that the same night he should come to a window outward toward a garden; and that window was barred with iron, and there Sir Lancelot promised to meet her when all folks were on sleep.

So then came Sir Lavayne driving to the gates, saying, 'Where is my lord, Sir Lancelot?' Anon he was sent for, and when Sir Lavayne saw Sir Lancelot, he said, 'Ah, my lord, I found how ye were hard bestad, for I have found your horse that was slain with arrows.'

'As for that,' said Sir Lancelot, 'I pray you, Sir Lavayne, speak ye of other matters, and let this pass, and right it another time an we may.'

Then the knights that were hurt were searched, and soft salves were laid to their wounds; and so it passed on till supper time. And all the cheer that might be made them there was done unto the queen and all her knights. Then when season was, they went unto their chambers, but in no wise the queen would not suffer her wounded knights to be fro her, but that they were laid in with draughts by her chamber, upon beds and pallets, that she herself might see unto them, that they wanted nothing.

So when Sir Lancelot was in his chamber which was assigned unto him, he called unto him Sir Lavayne, and told him that night he must speak with his lady, Queen Guinevere.

‘Sir,’ said Sir Lavayne, ‘let me go with you an it please you, for I dread me sore of [the] treason of Sir Mellyagaunce.’

‘Nay,’ said Sir Lancelot, ‘I thank you, but I will have nobody with me.’

Then Sir Lancelot took his sword in his hand, and privily went to the place where he had spied a ladder toforehand, and that he took under his arm, and bare it thorough the garden, and set it up to the window, and anon the queen was there ready to meet him.

And then they made their complaints to other of many diverse things, and then Sir Lancelot wished that he might have comen in to her.

‘Wit you well,’ said the queen, ‘I would as fain as ye, that ye might come in to me.’

‘Would ye so, madam,’ said Sir Lancelot, ‘with your heart that I were with you?’

‘Yea, truly,’ said the queen.

‘Then shall I prove my might,’ said Sir Lancelot, ‘for your love.’ And then he set his hands upon the bars of iron, and pulled at them with such a might that he brast them clean out of the stone walls. And therewithal one of the bars of iron cut the brawn of his hands thorough-out to the bone. And then he leapt into the chamber to the queen.

‘Make ye no noise,’ said the queen, ‘for my wounded knights lie here fast by me.’

So, to pass upon this tale, Sir Lancelot went to bed with the queen, and took no force of his hurt hand, but took his pleasance and his liking until it was the dawning of the day, for wit you well he slept not but watched. And when he saw his time that he might tarry no longer, he took his leave and departed at the window, and put it together as well as he might again, and so departed until his own chamber. And there he told Sir Lavayne how he was hurt. Then Sir Lavayne dressed his hand and [staunched] it, and put upon it a glove, that it should not

be espied. And so they lay long abed in the morning till it was nine of the clock.

Then Sir Mellyagaunce went to the queen's chamber, and found her ladies there ready clothed.

'Ah, Jesu mercy,' said Sir Mellyagaunce, 'what aileth you, that ye sleep this long?'

And therewithal he opened the curtain for to behold her. And then was he ware where she lay, and all the head-sheet, pillow and over-sheet was bebled of the blood of Sir Lancelot and of his hurt hand. When Sir Mellyagaunce espied that blood, then he deemed in her that she was false to the king, and that some of the wounded knights had lain by her all that night.

'Ah, ha, madam,' said Sir Mellyagaunce, 'now I have found you a false traitress unto my Lord Arthur; for now I prove well it was not for nought that ye laid these wounded knights within the bounds of your chamber. Therefore I call you of treason before my lord, King Arthur. And now I have proved you, madam, with a shameful deed; and that they been all false, or some of them, I will make good, for a wounded knight this night hath lain by you.'

'That is false,' said the queen, 'that I will report me unto them.'

But when the ten knights heard of Sir Mellyagaunce's words, and then they spake all at once, and said,

'Sir Mellyagaunce, thou falsely beliest my lady the queen, and that we will make good upon thee, any of us. Now choose which thou list of us when we are whole of the wounds thou gavest us.'

'Ye shall not,' said Sir Mellyagaunce. 'Away with your proud language! For here ye may all see, a wounded knight this night hath lain by the queen.'

Then they all looked and were sore ashamed when they saw that blood. And wit you well Sir Mellyagaunce was passing glad that he had the queen at such advantage, for he deemed by that to hide his own treason. And so in this rumour came in Sir Lancelot, and found them at a great affray.

'What array is this?' said Sir Lancelot.

Then Sir Mellyagaunce told them what he had found, and so he showed him the queen's bed.

'Now, truly,' said Sir Lancelot, 'ye did not your part nor knightly, to touch a queen's bed while it was drawn, and she lying therein. For I dare say,' said Sir Lancelot, 'my lord King Arthur himself would not have displayed her curtains, and she being within her bed, unless that

it had pleased him to have lain him down by her. And therefore, Sir Mellyagaunce, ye have done unworshipfully and shamefully to yourself.'

'Sir, I wot not what ye mean,' said Sir Mellyagaunce, 'but well I am sure there hath one of her hurt knights lain with her this night. And that will I prove with my hands that she is a traitress unto my lord King Arthur.'

'Beware what ye do,' said Sir Lancelot, 'for an ye say so, and will prove it, it will be taken at your hands.'

'My lord, Sir Lancelot,' said Sir Mellyagaunce, 'I rede you beware what ye do; for though ye are never so good a knight, as I wot well ye are renowned the best knight of the world, yet should ye be advised to do battle in a wrong quarrel, for God will have a stroke in every battle.'

'As for that,' said Sir Lancelot, 'God is to be dread! But as to that I say nay plainly, that this night there lay none of these ten knights wounded with my lady Queen Guinevere, and that will I prove with mine hands, that ye say untruly in that. Now, what say ye?' said Sir Lancelot.

'Thus I say,' said Sir Mellyagaunce, 'here is my glove, that she is a traitress unto my lord, King Arthur, and that this night one of the wounded knights lay with her.'

'Well, sir, and I receive your glove,' said Sir Lancelot.

And anon they were sealed with their signets, and delivered unto the ten knights.

'At what day shall we do battle together?' said Sir Lancelot.

'This day eight days,' said Sir Mellyagaunce, 'in the field beside Westminster.'

'I am agreed,' said Sir Lancelot.

'But now,' said Sir Mellyagaunce, 'sithen it is so that we must needs fight together, I pray you, as ye be a noble knight, await me with no treason, nother no villainy the meanwhile, nother none for you.'

'So God me help,' said Sir Lancelot, 'ye shall right well wit I was never of no such conditions. For I report me to all knights that ever have known me, I fared never with no treason, nother I loved never the fellowship of him that fared with treason.'

'Then let us go unto dinner,' said Sir Mellyagaunce, 'and after dinner the queen and ye may ride all unto Westminster.'

'I will well,' said Sir Lancelot.

Then Sir Mellyagaunce said to Sir Lancelot, 'Sir, pleaseth you to see estures of this castle?'

'With a good will,' said Sir Lancelot.

And then they went together from chamber to chamber, for Sir Lancelot dread no perils; for ever a man of worship and of prowess dreads but little of perils, for they ween that every man be as they be. But ever he that fareth with treason putteth often a true man in great danger. And so it befell upon Sir Lancelot that no peril dread; as he went with Sir Mellyagaunce he trod on a trap and the board rolled, and there Sir Lancelot fell down more than ten fathom into a cave full of straw.

And then Sir Mellyagaunce departed and made no fare no more than he that wist not where he was. And when Sir Lancelot was thus missed they marvelled where he was becomen; and then the queen and many of them deemed that he was departed, as he was wont to do, suddenly. For Sir Mellyagaunce made suddenly to put away onside Sir Lavayne's horse, that they might all understand that Sir Lancelot were departed suddenly.

So then it passed on till after dinner; and then Sir Lavayne would not stint until he had horse-litters for the wounded knights, that they might be carried in them. And so with the queen both ladies and gentlewomen and [other] rode unto Westminster; and there the knights told how Sir Mellyagaunce had appelled the queen of high treason, and how Sir Lancelot received the glove of him: 'And this day eight days they shall do battle before you.'

'By my head,' said King Arthur, 'I am afeared Sir Mellyagaunce hath charged himself with a great charge; but where is Sir Lancelot?' said the king.

'Sir, we wot not where he is, but we deem he is ridden to some adventure, as he is oftentimes wont to do, for he hath Sir Lavayne's horse.'

'Let him be,' said the king, 'for he will be founden, but if he be trapped with some treason.'

Thus leave we Sir Lancelot lying within that cave in great pain. And every day there came a lady and brought his meat and his drink, and wooed him every day to have lain by her; and ever Sir Lancelot said her nay.

'Then,' said she, 'sir, ye are not wise, for ye may never out of this prison, but if ye have my help. And also your lady, Queen Guinevere, shall be brent in your default, unless that ye be there at the day of battle.'

'God defend,' said Sir Lancelot, 'that she should be brent in my default. And if it be so,' said Sir Lancelot, 'that I may not be there, it shall be well understand, both at the king and the queen, and with all men of worship, that I am dead, sick, other in prison. For all men that know me will say for me that I am in some evil case an I be not that

day there. And then well I understand that there is some good knight other of my blood, some other that loves me, that will take my quarrel in hand. And therefore,' said Sir Lancelot, 'wit you well ye shall not fear me, and if there were no more women in all this land but ye, yet shall not I have ado with you.'

'Then are ye shamed,' said the lady, 'and destroyed for ever.'

'As for world's shame, now Jesu defend me, and as for my distress, it is welcome whatsoever it be that God send me.'

So she came to him again the same day that the battle should be, and said,

'Sir Lancelot, bethink you for ye are too hard-hearted. And therefore an ye would but once kiss me I should deliver you, and your armour, and the best horse that is within Sir Mellyagaunce's stable.'

'As for to kiss you,' said Sir Lancelot, 'I may do that and lose no worship. And wit you well an I understood there were any disworship for to kiss you I would not do it.'

Then he kissed her, and anon she gat him up until his armour. And when he was armed, she brought him till a stable, where stood twelve good coursers, and bade him to choose of the best. Then Sir Lancelot looked upon a white courser, and that liked him best; and anon he commanded him to be saddled with the best saddle of war; and so it was done. Then he gat he his own spear in his hand, and his sword by his side, and then he commended the lady unto God, and said,

'Lady, for this day's deed I shall do you service if ever it lie in my power.'

Now leave we here Sir Lancelot all that ever he might wallop and speak we of Queen Guinevere that was brought till a fire to be brent; for Sir Mellyagaunce was sure, him thought, that Sir Lancelot should not be at that battle; and therefore he ever cried upon King Arthur to do him justice, otherelse bring forth Sir Lancelot. Then was the king and all the court full sore abashed and shamed that the queen should have be brent in the default of Sir Lancelot.

'My lord King Arthur,' said Sir Lavayne, 'ye may understand that it is not well with my lord Sir Lancelot, for an he were on live, so he be not sick other in prison, wit you well he would have been here. For never heard ye that ever he failed yet his part for whom he should do battle for. And therefore,' said Sir Lavayne, 'my lord, King Arthur, I beseech you that ye will give me license to do battle here this day for my lord and master, and for to save my lady, the queen.'

'Gramercy, gentle Sir Lavayne,' said King Arthur, 'for I dare say

all that Sir Mellyagaunce putteth upon my lady the queen is wrong. For I have spoken with all the ten wounded knights, and there is not one of them, an he were whole and able to do battle, but he would prove upon Sir Mellyagaunce's body [that it is false that he putteth upon my lady].'

'So shall I,' said Sir Lavayne, 'in the defence of my lord, Sir Lancelot, an ye will give me leave.'

'I give you leave,' said King Arthur, 'and do your best, for I dare well say there is some treason done to Sir Lancelot.'

Then was Sir Lavayne armed and horsed, and deliverly at the lists' end [he rode] to perform his battle. And right as the heralds should cry: *Lechés les alere!* right so came Sir Lancelot driving with all the might of his horse. And then King Arthur cried 'Wo!' and 'Abide!'

And then Sir Lancelot called tofore King Arthur, and there he told openly tofore the king, all how that Sir Mellyagaunce had served him first and last. And when the king and queen, and all the lords, knew of the treason of Sir Mellyagaunce they were all ashamed on his behalf. Then was the queen sent for, and set by the king in the great trust of her champion.

And then Sir Lancelot and Sir Mellyagaunce dressed them together with spears as thunder, and there Sir Lancelot bare him quite over his horse's croup. And then Sir Lancelot alit and dressed his shield on his shoulder, and took his sword in his hand, and so they dressed to each other and smote many great strokes together. And at the last Sir Lancelot smote him such a buffet upon the helmet that he fell on the one side to the earth.

And then he cried upon him loud and said, 'Most noble knight, Sir Lancelot, save my life! For I yield me unto you, and I require you, as ye be a knight and fellow of the Table Round, slay me not, for I yield me as overcomen; and whether I shall live or die I put me in the king's hand and yours.'

Then Sir Lancelot wist not what to do, for he had lever than all the good in the world he might be revenged upon him. So Sir Lancelot looked upon the queen, if he might espy by any sign or countenance what she would have done. And anon the queen wagged her head upon Sir Lancelot, as who saith, 'Slay him!' And full well knew Sir Lancelot by her signs that she would have him dead.

Then Sir Lancelot bade him, 'Arise for shame and perform this battle with me to the utterance.'

'Nay,' said Sir Mellyagaunce, 'I will never arise until that ye take me as yolden and recreant.'

‘Well, I shall proffer you a large proffer,’ said Sir Lancelot, ‘that is for to say, I shall unarm my head and my left quarter of my body, all that may be unarmed as for that quarter, and I will let bind my left hand behind me, there it shall not help me, and right so I shall do battle with you.’

Then Sir Mellyagaunce start up, and said on high, ‘Take heed, my lord Arthur, of this proffer, for I will take it. And let him be disarmed and bounden according to his proffer.’

‘What say ye,’ said King Arthur unto Sir Lancelot, ‘will ye abide by your proffer?’

‘Yea, my lord,’ said Sir Lancelot, ‘for I will never go fro that I have once said.’

Then the knights parters of the field disarmed Sir Lancelot, first his head, and then his left arm, and his left side, and they bound his left arm to his left side fast behind his back, without shield or anything. And anon they yode together.

Wit you well there was many a lady and many a knight marvelled of Sir Lancelot [that] would jeopardy himself in such wise.

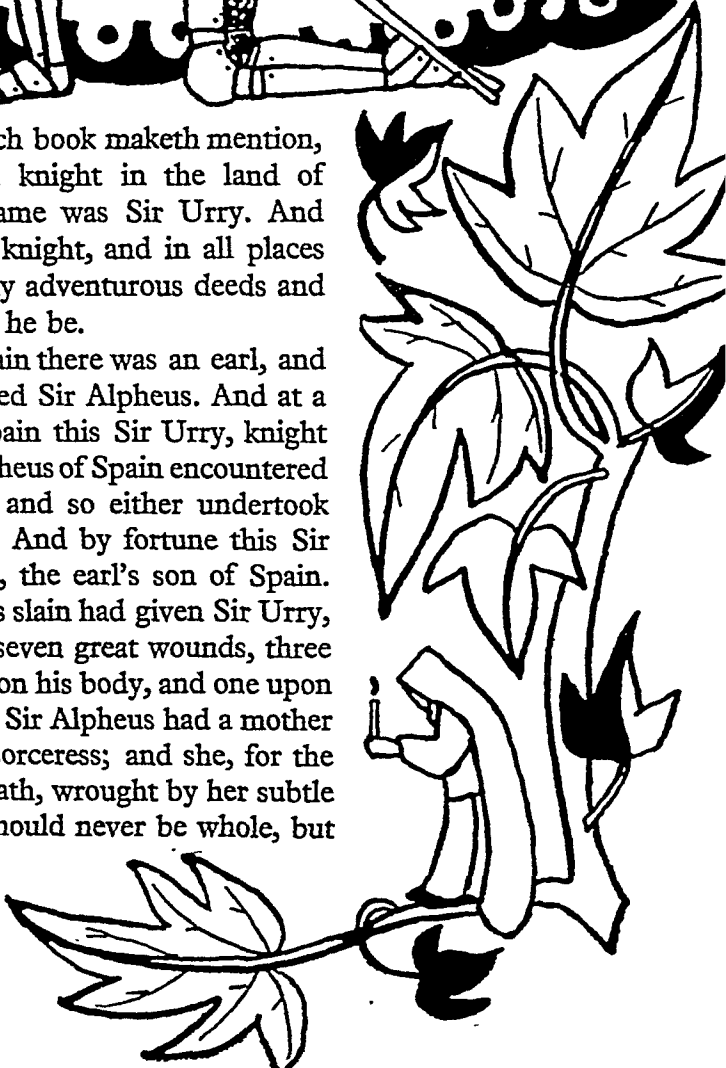
Then Sir Mellyagaunce came with sword all on high, and Sir Lancelot showed him openly his bare head and the bare left side. And when he weened to have smitten him upon the bare head, then lightly he devoided the left leg and the left side, and put his hand and his sword to that stroke, and so put it on side with great sleight. And then with great force Sir Lancelot smote him on the helmet such a buffet that the stroke carved the head in two parties.

Then there was no more to do, but he was drawn out of the field, and at the great instance of the knights of the Table Round, the king suffered him to be interred, and the mention made upon him, who slew him, and for what cause he was slain. And then the king and the queen made more of Sir Lancelot, and more he was cherished than ever he was aforehand.



THEN, as the French book maketh mention, there was a good knight in the land of Hungary whose name was Sir Urry. And he was an adventurous knight, and in all places where he might hear any adventurous deeds and of worship there would he be.

So it happened in Spain there was an earl, and his son's name was called Sir Alpheus. And at a great tournament in Spain this Sir Urry, knight of Hungary, and Sir Alpheus of Spain encountered together for very envy, and so either undertook other to the utterance. And by fortune this Sir Urry slew Sir Alpheus, the earl's son of Spain. But this knight that was slain had given Sir Urry, or ever he were slain, seven great wounds, three on the head and three on his body, and one upon his left hand. And this Sir Alpheus had a mother [which] was a great sorceress; and she, for the despite of her son's death, wrought by her subtle crafts that Sir Urry should never be whole, but



ever his wounds should one time fester and another time bleed, so that he should never be whole until the best knight of the world had searched his wounds. And thus she made her avaunt, wherethrough it was known that this Sir Urry should never be whole.

Then his mother let make an horse-litter and put him therein with two palfreys carrying him. And then she took with him his sister, a full fair damsel whose name was Fyleloly, and a page with him to keep their horses, and so they led Sir Urry thorough many countries. For, as the French book saith, she led him so seven year thorough all lands christened, and never could find no knight that might ease her son.

So she came unto Scotland and into the bounds of England. And by fortune she came unto the feast of Pentecost until King Arthur's court that at that time was holden at Carlisle. And when she came there she made it to be openly known how that she was come into that land for to heal her son. Then King Arthur let call that lady and ask her the cause why she brought that hurt knight into that land.

'My most noble king,' said that lady, 'wit you well I brought him hither to be healed of his wounds, that of all this seven year might never be whole.'

And thus she told the king, and where he was wounded and with whom, and how his mother discovered it in her pride how she had wrought by enchantment that he should never be whole until the best knight of the world had searched his wounds.

'And so I have passed all the lands christened thorough to have him healed except this land, and if I fail here in this land I will never take more pain upon me. And that is great pity, for he was a good knight and of great noblesse.'

'What is his name?' said King Arthur.

'My good and gracious lord,' she said, 'his name is Sir Urry of the Mount.'

'In good time,' said the king, 'and sithen ye are come into this land, ye are right welcome. And wit you well, here shall your son be healed an ever any Christian man heal him. And for to give other men of worship a courage I myself will assay to handle your son, and so shall all the kings, dukes and earls that been here present at this time, not presuming upon me that I am so worthy to heal your son by my deeds, but I will courage other men of worship to do as I will do.'

And then the king commanded all the kings, dukes and earls and all noble knights of the Round Table that were there that time present to come into the meadow of Carlisle. And so at that time there were but an hundred and ten of the Round Table, for forty knights were that time

away. And so we must begin at King Arthur, as was kindly to begin at him that was at that time the most man of worship christened.

Then King Arthur looked upon Sir Urry, and he thought he was a full likely man when he was whole. And then the king made to take him down of the litter, and laid him upon the earth, and anon there was laid a cushion of gold that he should kneel upon. And then King Arthur said,

‘Fair knight, me rueth of thy hurt, and for to courage all other knights I will pray thee softly to suffer me to handle thy wounds.’

‘My most noble christened king, do ye as ye list,’ said Sir Urry, ‘for I am at the mercy of God and at your commandment.’

So then King Arthur softly handled him. And then some of his wounds renewed upon bleeding.

Then King Claryaunce of Northumberland searched, and it would not be. And then Sir Barraunte le Apres, that was called the King with the Hundred Knights, he assayed and failed. So did King Uryence of the land of Gore. So did King Anguish of Ireland, and so did King Newtrys of Garloth. So did King Carydos of Scotland. So did the duke, Sir Galahalt the Haut Prince. So did Sir Constantyne that was King Cador’s son of Cornwall. So did Duke Chalence of Claraunce. So did the Earl of Ulbawys. So did the Earl Lambayle. So did the Earl Arystaunce.

Then came in Sir Gawayne with his three sons, Sir Gyngalyn, Sir Florence and Sir Lovell (these two were begotten upon Sir Braundeles’ sister) and all they failed. Then came in Sir Agravayne, Sir Gaheris, and Sir Mordred and the good knight Sir Gareth that was of very knighthood worth all the brethren.

So came in the knights of Sir Lancelot’s kin, but Sir Lancelot was not that time in the court, for he was that time upon his adventures. Then Sir Lionel, Sir Ector de Maris, Sir Bors de Ganis, Sir Blamour de Ganis, Sir Bleoberis de Ganis, Sir Gahalantyne, Sir Galihodyn, Sir Menaduke, Sir Vyllyers the Valiant, Sir Hebes le Renommé, all these were of Sir Lancelot’s kin, and all they failed.

Then came in Sir Sagramour le Desirous, Sir Dodynas le Sauvage, Sir Dinadan, Sir Brunor le Noir that Sir Kay named La Cote Male Tale, and Sir Kay le Seneschal, Sir Kay d’Estranges, Sir Meliot de Logris, Sir Petipace of Winchelsea, Sir Galleron of Galway, Sir Melyon of the Mountain, Sir Cardox, Sir Uwayne les Avoutres, and Sir Ozanna le Cure Hardy.

Then came in Sir Ascamour, and Sir Grummor and Grummorson, Sir Crosseleme, Sir Sevrause le Breuse that was called a passing strong knight.

For as the book saith, the chief lady of the Lady of the Lake feasted Sir Lancelot and Sir Severeuse le Breuse, and when she had feasted them both at sundry times, she prayed them to give her a done, and anon they granted her. And then she prayed Sir Severeuse that he would promise her never to do battle against Sir Lancelot, and in the same wise she prayed Sir Lancelot never to do battle against Sir Severeuse, and so either promised her. (For, as the French book saith, that Sir Severeuse had never courage nor great lust to do battle against no man but if it were against giants and against dragons and wild beasts.)

So leave we this matter and speak we of them that at the king's request were there at the high feast, as knights of the Round Table, for to seek Sir Urry. And to this intent the king did it, to wit which was the most noblest knight among them all.

Then came in Sir Aglovale, Sir Durnor and Sir Tor that was begotten upon the cow-herd's wife, but he was begotten before Aryes wedded her (and King Pellynor begat them all: first Sir Tor, Sir Aglovale, Sir Durnor, Sir Lamorak, the most noblest knight, one of them that ever was in King Arthur's days as for a worldly knight, and Sir Percivale that was peerless, except Sir Galahad, in holy deeds. But they died in the quest of the Sangreal.)

Then came in Sir Gryfflet le Fils de Dieu, Sir Lucan the Butler, Sir Bedyvere, his brother, Sir Braundeles, Sir Constantyne, Sir Cador's son of Cornwall that was king after Arthur's days, and Sir Clegis, Sir Sadok, Sir Dynas le Seneschal de Cornwall, Sir Fergus, Sir Dryaunt, Sir Lambegus, Sir Clarrus of Clearmount, Sir Cloddrus, Sir Hectymere, Sir Edward of Carnarvon, Sir Pryamus which was christened by the means of Sir Tristram, the noble knight, and these three were brethren; Sir Helayne le Blanc that was son unto Sir Bors, for he begat him upon King Brandegoris' daughter, and Sir Bryan de Lystenoyse; Sir Gauter, Sir Reynold, Sir Gyllymere, were three brethren which Sir Lancelot won upon a bridge in Sir Kay's arms; Sir Guyarte le Petite, Sir Bellinger le Beuse that was son to the good knight Sir Alysaunder le Orphelyn that was slain by the treason of King Mark.

Also that traitor king slew the noble knight Sir Tristram as he sat harping before his lady La Beale Isode with a trenchant glaive, for whose death was the most wailing of any knight that ever was in King Arthur's days, for there was never none so bewailed as was Sir Tristram and Sir Lamerok, for they were with treason slain: Sir Tristram by King Mark and Sir Lamorak by Sir Gawayne and his brethren.

And this Sir Bellenger revenged the death of his father, Sir Alysaunder, and Sir Tristram, for he slew King Mark. And La Beale Isode

died sowning upon the cross of Sir Tristram, whereof was great pity. And all that were with King Mark which were of assent of the death of Sir Tristram were slain, as Sir Andred and many other.

Then came Sir Hebes, Sir Morganour, Sir Sentrayle, Sir Suppynabiles, Sir Belyaunce le Orgulus, that the good knight Sir Lamorak won in plain battle, Sir Neroveus and Sir Plenoryus, two good knights that Sir Lancelot won. Sir Darras, Sir Harry le Fils Lake, Sir Ermynde, brother to King Hermaunce, for whom Sir Palomydes fought at the Red City with two brethren; and Sir Selyses of the Dolorous Tower, Sir Edward of Orkney, Sir Ironside that was called the noble knight of the Red Lands, that Sir Gareth won for the love of Dame Lyonesse; Sir Arrokk, Sir Degrevaunt, Sir Degrave Sans Villainy that fought with the giant of Black Low; Sir Epinogrys that was the king's son of Northumberland, Sir Pelleas that loved the lady Ettarde (and he had died for her sake, had not been one of the ladies of the lake whose name was Dame Nynyve; and she wed Sir Pelleas, and she saved him ever after, that he was never slain by her days; and he was a full noble knight); and Sir Lamyell of Cardiff that was a great lover, Sir Playne de Force, Sir Melyans de Lyle, Sir Boarte le Cure Hardy that was King Arthur's son, Sir Mador de la Porte, Sir Collgrevaunce, Sir Hervyse de la Forest Sauvage, Sir Marrok the good knight that was betrayed with his wife, for she made him seven year a werewolf; Sir Persaunt, Sir Pertolope, his brother, that was called the Green Knight, and Sir Perymones, brother unto them both, which was called the Red Knight, that Sir Gareth won when he was called Beaumains.

All these hundred knights and ten searched Sir Urry's wounds by the commandment of King Arthur.

'Mercy, Jesu!' said King Arthur, 'where is Sir Lancelot du Lake, that he is not here at this time?'

And thus as they stood and spake of many things, there one espied Sir Lancelot that come riding toward them, and anon they told the king.

'Peace,' said the king, 'let no man say nothing until he come to us.'

So when Sir Lancelot had espied King Arthur he descended down from his horse and came to the king and salued him and them all.

And anon as the damsel, Sir Urry's sister, saw Sir Lancelot, she roamed to her brother thereas he lay in his litter and said,

'Brother, here is come a knight that my heart giveth greatly unto.'

'Fair sister,' said Sir Urry, 'so doth my heart light greatly against him, and my heart giveth me more unto him than to all these that hath searched me.'

Then said King Arthur unto Sir Lancelot, 'Sir, ye must do as we have done,' and told him what they had done and showed him them all that had searched him.

'Jesu defend me,' said Sir Lancelot, 'while so many noble kings and knights have failed, that I should presume upon me to enchieve that all ye, my lords, might not enchieve.'

'Ye shall not choose,' said King Arthur, 'for I command you to do as we all have done.'

'My most renowned lord,' said Sir Lancelot, 'I know well I dare not, nor may not disobey you. But an I might or durst, wit you well I would not take upon me to touch that wounded knight in that intent that I should pass all other knights. Jesu defend me from that shame!'

'Sir, ye take it wrong,' said King Arthur, 'for ye shall not do it for no presumption, but for to bear us fellowship, insomuch as ye be a fellow of the Round Table. And wit you well,' said King Arthur, 'an ye prevail not and heal him, I dare say there is no knight in this land that may heal him. And therefore I pray you do as we have done.'

And then all the kings and knights for the most party prayed Sir Lancelot to search him. And then the wounded knight, Sir Urry, set him up weakly and said unto Sir Lancelot,

'Now, courteous knight, I require thee, for God's sake, heal my wounds! For methinketh ever sithen ye came here my wounds grieveth me not so much as they did.'

'Ah, my fair lord,' said Sir Lancelot, 'Jesu would that I might help you! For I shame sore with myself that I should be thus required, for never was I able in worthiness to do so high a thing.'

Then Sir Lancelot kneeled down by the wounded knight, saying, 'My lord Arthur, I must do your commandment, which is sore against my heart.' And then he held up his hands and looked unto the east, saying secretly unto himself, 'Now, Blessed Father and Son and Holy Ghost, I beseech Thee of Thy mercy that my simple worship and honesty be saved, and Thou Blessed Trinity, Thou mayst give me power to heal this sick knight by the great virtue and grace of Thee, but, Good Lord, never of myself.'

And then Sir Lancelot prayed Sir Urry to let him see his head; and then, devoutly kneeling, he ransacked the three wounds, that they bled a little; and forthwithal the wounds fair healed and seemed as they had been whole a seven year. And in like wise he searched his body of other three wounds, and they healed in like wise. And then the last of all he searched his hand, and anon it fair healed.

Then King Arthur and all the kings and knights kneeled down and

gave thankings and loving unto God and unto His Blessed Mother. And ever Sir Lancelot wept, as he had been a child that had been beaten!

Then King Arthur let ravish priests and clerks in the most devoutest wise to bring in Sir Urry unto Carlisle with singing and loving to God. And when this was done the king let clothe him in rich manner, and then was there but few better-made knights in all the court, for he was passing well made and bigly.

Then King Arthur asked Sir Urry how he felt himself.

'Ah, my good and gracious lord, I felt myself never so lusty.'

'Then will ye joust and do any arms?' said King Arthur.

'Sir, an I had all that longed unto jousts, I would be soon ready.'

Then King Arthur made a party of a hundred knights to be against an hundred, and so upon the morn they jousted for a diamond, but there jousted none of the dangerous knights. And so, for to shorten this tale, Sir Urry and Sir Lavayne jousted best that day, for there was none of them but he overthrew and pulled down a thirty knights.

And then by assent of all the kings and lords Sir Urry and Sir Lavayne were made knights of the Table Round. And then Sir Lavayne kissed his love unto Dame Fylleloly, Sir Urry's sister, and then they were wedded with great joy, and so King Arthur gave to every of them a barony of lands.

And this Sir Urry would never go from Sir Lancelot, but he and Sir Lavayne awaited evermore upon him; and they were in all the court accounted for good knights, and full desirous in arms. And many noble deeds they did, for they would have no rest but ever sought upon their deeds. Thus they lived in all that court with great noblesse and joy long times.

But every night and day Sir Agravayne, Sir Gawayne's brother, awaited Queen Guinevere and Sir Lancelot to put them both to a rebuke and shame.

And so I leave here of this tale, and overleap great books of Sir Lancelot, what great adventures he did when he was called 'le Chevalier de Chariot', for, as the French book saith, because of despite that knights and ladies called him 'the Knight that rode in the chariot', like as he were judged to the gibbet, therefore in the despite of all them that named him so, he was carried in a chariot a twelve-month; for but little after that he had slain Sir Melyagaunt in the queen's quarrel, he never of a twelve-month come on horseback. And, as the French book saith, he did that twelve-month more than forty battles.

And because I have lost the very matter of Chevalier de Chariot I

depart from the tale of Sir Lancelot; and here I go unto the Morte Arthur, and that caused Sir Agravayne.

And here on the other side followeth The Most Piteous Tale of the Morte Arthur Sans Guerdon par le Chevalier Sir Thomas Malory, Knight.

Jesu, ayede ly pur voutre bone mercy! Amen.

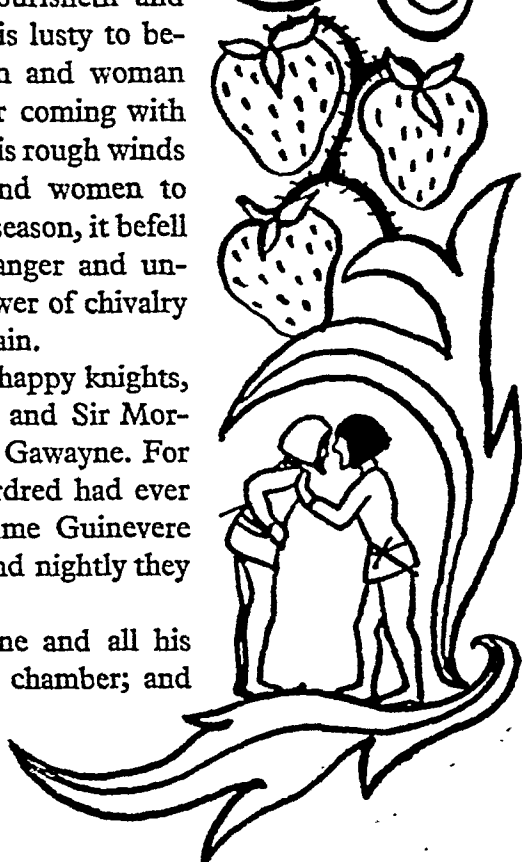
THE MOST PITEOUS TALE
OF THE MORTE ARTHUR
SANS GUERDON



IN May when every heart flourisheth and burgeoneth, [for as the season is lusty to behold and comfortable, so man and woman rejoiceth and gladdeth of summer coming with his fresh flowers: for winter with his rough winds and blasts causeth lusty men and women to cower and to sit by fires], so this season, it befell in the month of May, a great anger and unhappy that stinted not till the flower of chivalry of the world was destroyed and slain.

And all was long upon two unhappy knights, which were named Sir Agravayne and Sir Mordred, that were brethren unto Sir Gawayne. For this Sir Agravayne and Sir Mordred had ever a privy hate unto the queen Dame Guinevere and to Sir Lancelot; and daily and nightly they ever watched upon Sir Lancelot.

So it misfortuned Sir Gawayne and all his brethren were in King Arthur's chamber; and



then Sir Agravayne said thus openly, and not in no counsel, that many knights might hear,

‘I marvel that we all be not ashamed both to see and to know how Sir Lancelot lieth daily and nightly by the queen. And all we know well that it is so: and it is shamefully suffered of us all, that we all should suffer so noble a king as King Arthur is to be shamed.’

Then spake Sir Gawayne, and said,

‘Brother, Sir Agravayne, I pray you and charge you move no such matters no more afore me, for wit you well, I will not be of your counsel.’

‘So God me help,’ said Sir Gaheris and Sir Gareth, ‘we will not be knowing of your deeds.’

‘Then will I,’ said Sir Mordred.

‘I leave you well,’ said Sir Gawayne, ‘for ever unto all unhappiness, sir, ye will grant. And I would that ye left, and made you not so busy, for I know,’ said Sir Gawayne, ‘what will fall of it.’

‘Fall whatsoever fall may,’ said Sir Agravayne, ‘I will disclose it to the king.’

‘Not by my counsel,’ said Sir Gawayne, ‘for an there arise war and wrack betwixt Sir Lancelot [and us], wit you well, brother, there will many kings and great lords hold with Sir Lancelot. Also, brother Sir Agravayne,’ said Sir Gawayne, ‘ye must remember how oftentimes Sir Lancelot hath rescued the king and the queen; and the best of us all had been full cold at the heart-root had not Sir Lancelot been better than we, and that hath he proved himself full oft. And as for my part,’ said Sir Gawayne, ‘I will never be against Sir Lancelot, for one day’s deed, that was when he rescued me from King Carados of the Dolorous Tower, and slew him, and saved my life. Also, brother Sir Agravayne and Sir Mordred, in like wise Sir Lancelot rescued you both, and three-score and two, from Sir Tarquin. And therefore, brother, methinks such noble deeds and kindness should be remembered.’

‘Do ye as ye list,’ said Sir Agravayne, ‘for I will layne it no longer.’

With these words came in King Arthur. ‘Now brother,’ said Sir Gawayne, ‘stint your strife.’ ‘That will I not,’ said Sir Agravayne and Sir Mordred.

‘Well, will ye so?’ said Sir Gawayne. ‘Then God speed you, for I will not hear of your tales, nother be of your counsel.’

‘No more will I,’ said Sir Gaheris.

‘Nother I,’ said Sir Gareth, ‘for I shall never say evil by that man that made me knight.’

And therewithal they three departed, making great dole.

'Alas,' said Sir Gawayne and Sir Gareth, 'now is this realm wholly mischieved, and the noble fellowship of the Round Table shall be disparbeled.'

So they departed, and then King Arthur asked them what noise they made.

'My lord,' said Sir Agravayne, 'I shall tell you for I may keep it no longer. Here is I, and my brother Sir Mordred, brake unto my brothers Sir Gawayne, Sir Gaheris, and to Sir Gareth; for this is all, to make it short: we know all that Sir Lancelot holdeth your queen, and hath done long; and we be your sister's sons, we may suffer it no longer. And all we wot that ye should be above Sir Lancelot; and ye are the king that made him knight, and therefore we will prove it, that he is a traitor to your person.'

'If it be so,' said the king, 'wit you well he is none other. But I would be loath to begin such a thing but I might have proofs of it, for Sir Lancelot is an hardy knight, and all ye know that he is the best knight among us all; and but if he be taken with the deed, he will fight with him that bringeth up the noise, and I know no knight that is able to match him. Therefore an it be sooth as ye say, I would he were taken with the deed.'

For, as the French book saith, the king was full loath that such a noise should be upon Sir Lancelot and his queen; for the king had a deeming of it, but he would not hear thereof, for Sir Lancelot had done so much for him and for the queen so many times, that wit you well the king loved him passingly well.

'My lord,' said Sir Agravayne, 'ye shall ride to-morn an-hunting, and doubt ye not Sir Lancelot will not go with you. And so, when it draweth toward night, ye may send the queen word that ye will lie out all that night, and so may ye send for your cooks. And then upon pain of death that night we shall take him with the queen, and we shall bring him unto you quick or dead.'

'I will well,' said the king. 'Then I counsel you to take with you sure fellowship.'

'Sir,' said Sir Agravayne, 'my brother, Sir Mordred and I, will take with us twelve knights of the Round Table.'

'Beware,' said King Arthur, 'for I warn you ye shall find him wight.'

'Let us deal,' said Sir Agravayne and Sir Mordred.

So on the morn King Arthur rode an-hunting, and sent word to the queen that he would be out all that night. Then Sir Agravayne and Sir Mordred gat to them twelve knights, and hid themselves in a chamber

in the Castle of Carlisle, and these were their names: Sir Colgrevaunce, Sir Mador de la Porte, Sir Gyngalyn, Sir Meliot de Logres, Sir Petipace of Winchelsea, Sir Galleron of Galway, Sir Melyon of the Mountain, Sir Ascamore, Sir Gromoresom Erioure, Sir Cursesalayne, Sir Florence, Sir Lovel. So these twelve knights were with Sir Mordred and Sir Agravayne, and all they were of Scotland, other else of Sir Gawayne's kin, other [well] willers to his brother.

So when the night came, Sir Lancelot told Sir Bors how he would go that night and speak with the queen.

'Sir,' said Sir Bors, 'ye shall not go this night by my counsel.'

'Why?' said Sir Lancelot.

'Sir, for I dread me ever of Sir Agravayne, that waiteth upon you daily to do you shame and us all. And never gave my heart against no going, that ever ye went to the queen, so much as now; for I mistrust that the king is out this night from the queen [by cause peradventure he hath lain some watch for you and the queen]. Therefore I dread me sore of some treason.'

'Have ye no dread,' said Sir Lancelot, 'for I shall go and come again, and make no tarrying.'

'Sir,' said Sir Bors, 'that me repents, for I dread me sore that your going this night shall wrath us all.'

'Fair nephew,' said Sir Lancelot, 'I marvel me much why ye say thus, sithen the queen hath sent for me. And wit you well I will not be so much a coward, but she shall understand I will see her good grace.'

'Godspeed you well,' said Sir Bors, 'and send you sound and safe again.'

So Sir Lancelot departed, and took his sword under his arm, and so he walked in his mantle that noble knight and put himself in great jeopardy. And so he passed on till he came to the queen's chamber, and so lightly he was had into the chamber.

For, as the French book saith, the queen and Lancelot were together. And whether they were abed other at other manner of disports, me list not thereof make no mention, for love that time was not as love is nowadays.

But thus as they were together, there came Sir Agravayne and Sir Mordred, with twelve knights with them of the Round Table, and they said with great crying and scaring voice,

'Thou traitor, Sir Lancelot, now art thou taken.'

And thus they cried with a loud voice, that all the court might hear it. And these fourteen knights all were armed at all points as they should fight in a battle.

'Alas,' said Queen Guinevere, 'now are we mischieved both.'

'Madam,' said Sir Lancelot, 'is there here any armour within you, that might cover my body withal? And if there be any give it me, and I shall soon stint their malice, by the grace of God.'

'Now, truly,' said the queen, 'I have none armour, nother helm, shield, sword, nother spear; wherefore I dread me sore our long love is come to a mischievous end. For I hear by their noise there be many noble knights, and well I wot they be surely armed, and against them ye may make no resistance. Wherefore ye are likely to be slain, and then shall I be brent. For an ye might escape them,' said the queen, 'I would not doubt but that ye would rescue me in what danger that I ever stood in.'

'Alas,' said Sir Lancelot, 'in all my life thus was I never bestead, that I should be thus shamefully slain for lack of mine armour.'

But ever Sir Agravayne and Sir Mordred cried,

'Traitor knight, come out of the queen's chamber! For wit thou well thou art beset so that thou shalt not escape.'

'Ah, Jesu mercy,' said Sir Lancelot, 'this shameful cry and noise I may not suffer, for better were death at once than thus to endure this pain.'

Then he took the queen in his arms, and kissed her, and said,

'Most noblest Christian queen, I beseech you as ye have been ever my special good lady, and I at all times your poor knight and true unto my power, and as I never failed you in right nor in wrong sithen the first day King Arthur made me knight, that ye will pray for my soul if that I be slain. For well I am assured that Sir Bors, my nephew, and all the remnant of my kin, with Sir Lavayne and Sir Urry, that they will not fail you to rescue you from the fire; and therefore, mine own lady, recomfort yourself, whatsoever come of me, that ye go with Sir Bors, my nephew, and they all will do you all the pleasure that they may and ye shall live like a queen upon my lands.'

'Nay, Sir Lancelot, nay,' said the queen. 'Wit thou well that I will [not] live long after thy days. But an ye be slain, I will take my death as meekly as ever did martyr take his death for Jesu Christ's sake.'

'Well, madam,' said Sir Lancelot, 'sith it is so that the day is come that our love must depart, wit you well I shall sell my life as dear as I may. And a thousandfold,' said Sir Lancelot, 'I am more heavier for you than for myself. And now I had lever than to be lord of all Christendom, that I had sure armour upon me, that men might speak of my deeds or ever I were slain.'

'Truly,' said the queen, 'an it might please God I would that they would take me and slay me, and suffer you to escape.'

‘That shall never be,’ said Sir Lancelot, ‘God defend me from such a shame, but Jesu Christ be thou my shield and mine armour!’

And therewith Sir Lancelot wrapped his mantle about his arm well and surely; and by then they had gotten a great form out of the hall, and therewith they all rushed at the door.

‘Now, fair lords,’ said Sir Lancelot, ‘leave your noise and your rushing, and I shall set upon this door, and then may ye do with me what it liketh you.’

‘Come off then,’ said they all, ‘and do it, for it availeth thee not to strive against us all, and therefore let us into this chamber, and we shall save thy life until thou come to King Arthur.’

Then Sir Lancelot unbarred the door, and with his left hand he held it open a little, that but one might come in at once. And so there came striding a good knight, a much man and a large, and his name was called Sir Colgrevaunce of Gore. And he with a sword struck at Sir Lancelot mightily; and so he put aside the stroke and gave him such a buffet upon the helmet, that he fell grovelling [dead] within the chamber door.

Then Sir Lancelot with great might drew the knight within the chamber door. And then Sir Lancelot with help of the queen and her ladies he was lightly armed in Colgrevaunce’s armour. And ever stood Sir Agravayne and Sir Mordred crying,

‘Traitor knight! Come forth out of the queen’s chamber!’

‘Sir, lease your noise,’ said Sir Lancelot, ‘for wit you well, Sir Agravayne, ye shall not prison me this night!’

‘And therefore an ye do by my counsel, go ye all from this chamber door, and make you no such crying and such manner of slander as ye do. For I promise you by my knighthood, an ye will depart and make no more noise, I shall as to-morn appear afore you all and before the king, and then let it be seen which of you all, other else ye all, that will depreve me of treason. And there shall I answer you as a knight should, that hither I came to the queen for no manner of mal engine, and that will I prove and make it good upon you with my hands.’

‘Fie upon thee, traitor,’ said Sir Agravayne and Sir Mordred, ‘for we will have thee maugre thy head, and slay thee an we list! For we let thee wit we have the choice of King Arthur to save thee other slay thee.’

‘Ah sirs,’ said Sir Lancelot, ‘is there none other grace with you? Then keep yourself!’

And then Sir Lancelot set all open the chamber door, and mightily and knightly he strode in among them. And anon at the first stroke he

slew Sir Agravayne. And anon after twelve of his fellows. Within a while he had laid them down cold to the earth, for there was none of the twelve knights might stand Sir Lancelot one buffet. And also he wounded Sir Mordred, and therewithal he fled with all his might. And then Sir Lancelot returned again unto the queen, and said,

‘Madam, now wit you well all our true love is brought to an end, for now will King Arthur ever be my foe. And therefore, madam, an it like you that I may have you with me, I shall save you from all manner adventures dangers.’

‘Sir, that is not best,’ said the queen, ‘meseemeth for now ye have done so much harm, it will be best that ye hold you still with this. And if ye see that as tomorn they will put me unto death, then may ye rescue me as ye think best.’

‘I will well,’ said Sir Lancelot, ‘for have ye no doubt, while I am a man living I shall rescue you.’

And then he kissed her, and either of them gave other a ring; and so the queen he left there and went until his lodging.

When Sir Bors saw Sir Lancelot he was never so glad of his home coming.

‘Jesu mercy,’ said Sir Lancelot, ‘why be ye all armed? what meaneth this?’

‘Sir,’ said Sir Bors, ‘after ye were departed from us, we all that been of your blood and your well-willers were so a dretched that some of us leapt out of our beds naked, and some in their dreams caught naked swords in their hands and therefore,’ said Sir Bors, ‘we deem there was some great strife on hand; and we deemed that we were betrayed with some treason; and therefore we made us thus ready, what need that ever ye were in.’

‘My fair nephew,’ said Sir Lancelot unto Sir Bors, ‘now shall ye wit all that this night I was more hard bestead than ever I was days of my life, and thanked be God I am myself escaped their danger.’ And so he told them all how and in what manner, as ye have heard beforehand. ‘And therefore, my fellows,’ said Sir Lancelot, ‘I pray you all that ye will be of heart good and help me in what need that ever I stand, for now is war comen to us all.’

‘Sir,’ said Bors, ‘all is welcome that God sendeth us, and as we have taken much weal with you and much worship we will take the woe with you as we have taken the weal.’

And therefore they said, all the good knights,

‘Look ye take no discomfort, for there is no bands of knights under

heaven but we shall be able to grieve them as much as they us, and therefore discomfort not yourself by no manner. And we shall gather together all that we love and that loveth us, and what that ye will have done shall be done. And therefore let us take the woe and the joy together.'

'Grand mercy,' said Sir Lancelot, 'of your good comfort, for in my great distress, fair nephew, ye comfort me greatly. But this, my fair nephew, I would that ye did in all haste that ye may [ere] it is far days past, that ye will look in their lodging that been lodged nigh here about the king, which will hold with me and which will not. For now I would know which were my friends fro my foes.'

'Sir,' said Sir Bors, 'I shall do my pain and ere it be seven of the clock I shall wit of such as ye have doubt for, who that will hold with you.'

Then Sir Bors called unto him Sir Lionel, Sir Ector de Maris, Sir Blamour de Ganis, Sir Gahalantyne, Sir Galyhodyn, Sir Galyhud, Sir Menadyuke, Sir Vyllyers the Valiant, Sir Hebes le Renowne, Sir Lavayne, Sir Ury of Hungary, Sir Nerovens, Sir Plenoryus (for these two were knights that Sir Lancelot won upon a bridge, and therefore they would never be against him). And Sir Harry le Fyz Lake, and Sir Selyses of the Dolorous Tower, Sir Melias de Lyle and Sir Belengerus le Beuse, that was Sir Alysander le Orphelin [son] because his mother was kin unto Sir Lancelot, he held with him. So came Sir Palomydes and Sir Safer, his brother, to hold with Sir Lancelot, and Sir Clegis, Sir Sadok, and Sir Dynas, Sir Clarrus of Cleremont.

So these two-and-twenty knights drew them together, by then they were armed and on horseback, they promised Sir Lancelot to do what he would. Then there fell to them, what of North Wales and of Cornwall, for Sir Lamorak's sake and for Sir Tristram's sake, to the number of a seven score knights. Then spake Sir Lancelot, 'Wit you well I have been ever since I came to this court well-willed unto my lord, Arthur, and unto my lady, Queen Guinevere, unto my power. And this night by cause my lady the queen sent for me to speak with her, I suppose it was made by treason; howbeit I dare largely excuse her person, notwithstanding I was there [by a forecast] near-hand slain, but as Jesu provided for me.'

And then that noble knight Sir Lancelot told them how he was hard bestead in the queen's chamber, and how and in what manner he escaped from them.

'And therefore, wit you well, my fair lords, I am sure there nis but war unto me and to mine. And for cause I have slain this night Sir

Agravayne, Sir Gawayne's brother, and at the least twelve of his fellows, and for this cause now am I sure of mortal war. For these knights were sent by King Arthur to betray me, and therefore the king will in this heat and malice judge the queen unto brenning, and that may not I suffer, that she should be brent for my sake. For an I may be heard and suffered and so taken, I will fight for the queen, that she is a true lady until her lord. But the king in his heat I dread will not take me as I ought to be taken.'

'My lord, Sir Lancelot,' said Sir Bors, 'by mine advice ye shall take the woe with the weal. And sithen it is fallen as it is, I counsel you to keep yourself, for an ye will yourself, there is no fellowship of knights christened that shall do you wrong. And so I will counsel you my lord, that my lady, Queen Guinevere, and she be in any distress, insomuch as she is in pain for your sake, that ye knightly rescue her, for an ye did any other wise, all the world would speak you shame to the world's end. Insomuch as ye were taken with her, whether ye did right other wrong, it is now your part to hold with the queen, that she be not slain and put to a mischievous death. For an she so die the shame shall be evermore yours.'

'Now Jesu defend me from shame,' said Sir Lancelot, 'and keep and save my lady the queen from villainy and shameful death, and that she never be destroyed in my default! Wherefore, my fair lords, my kin, and my friends,' said Sir Lancelot, 'what will ye do?'

And anon they said all with one voice, 'We will do as ye will do.'

'Then I put this case unto you,' said Sir Lancelot 'that my lord King Arthur by evil counsel will to-morn in his heat put my lady the queen unto the fire and there to be brent, then I pray you counsel me what is best for me to do.'

Then they said all at once with one voice,

'Sir, us thinks best that ye knightly rescue the queen. Insomuch as she shall be brent, it is for your sake; and it is to suppose, an ye might be handled, ye should have the same death other else a more shamefuler death. And sir, we say all, that ye have rescued her from death many times for other men's quarrels; therefore us seemeth it is more your worship that ye rescue the queen from this quarrel insomuch that she hath it for your sake.'

Then Sir Lancelot stood still, and said, 'My fair lords, wit you well I would be loath to do that thing that should dishonour you or my blood; and wit you well I would be full loath that my lady, the queen, should die such a shameful death. But an it be so that ye will counsel me to

rescue her, I must do much harm ere I rescue her; and peradventure I shall there destroy some of my best friends, [and that should much repent me. And peradventure there be some, an they could well bring it about, or disobey my lord King Arthur, they would soon come to me, the which I were loath to hurt]. And if so be that I may win the queen away, where shall I keep her?

‘Sir, that shall be the least care of us all,’ said Sir Bors, ‘for how did the noble knight Sir Tristram? By your good will kept not he with him La Beal Isode near three year in Joyous Gard? the which was done by your althers advice, and that same place is your own; and in likewise may ye do an ye list, and take the queen knightly away with you if so be that the king will judge her to be brent. And in Joyous Gard may ye keep her long enough until the heat be past of the king and then it may fortune you to bring the queen again to the king with great worship; and peradventure ye shall have then thanks for your bringing home, whether other may happen to have maugre.’

‘That is hard for to do,’ said Sir Lancelot, ‘for by Sir Tristram I may have a warning; for when by means of treaties, Sir Tristram brought again La Beal Isode unto King Mark from Joyous Gard, look ye now what fall on the end, how shamefully that false traitor King Mark slew him as he sat harping afore his lady La Beal Isode. With a grounden glaive he thrust him in behind to the heart which grieveth sore me,’ said Sir Lancelot, ‘to speak of his death, for all the world may not find such another knight.’

‘All this is truth,’ said Sir Bors, ‘but there is one thing shall courage you and us all; ye know well that King Arthur and King Mark were never like of conditions, for there was never yet man that ever could prove King Arthur untrue of his promise.’

‘But so, to make short tale, they were all condescended that, for better other for worse, if so were that the queen were brought on that morn to the fire, shortly they all would rescue her. And so by the advice of Sir Lancelot, they put them all in a wood, as nigh Carlisle as they might, and there they abode still, to wit what the king would do.

Now turn we again, that when Sir Mordred was escaped from Sir Lancelot, he gat his horse and came to King Arthur, sore wounded and all forbled; and there he told the king all how it was, and how they were all slain save himself alone.

‘Jesu mercy! how may this be?’ said the king. ‘Took ye him in the queen’s chamber?’

‘Yea, so God me help,’ said Sir Mordred, ‘there we found him un-

armed, and anon he slew Sir Colgrevaunce, and armed him in his armour.' And so he told the king from the beginning to the ending.

'Jesu mercy,' said the king, 'he is a marvellous knight of prowess. And alas,' said the king, 'me sore repenteth that ever Sir Lancelot should be against me. For now I am sure the noble fellowship of the Round Table is broken for ever, for with him will many a noble knight hold. And now it is fallen so,' said the king, 'that I may not with my worship, but my queen must suffer death,' and was sore amoved.

So then there was made great ordinance in this ire and the queen must needs be judged to the death. And the law was such in tho days that whatsomever they were, of what estate or degree, if they were found guilty of treason, there should be none other remedy but death; and other the menour other the taking with the deed should be causer of their hasty judgment. And right so was it ordained for Queen Guinevere by cause Sir Mordred was escaped sore wounded, and the death of thirteen knights of the Round Table. These proofs and experiences caused King Arthur to command the queen to the fire and there to be brent.

Then spake Sir Gawayne, and said, 'My lord Arthur, I would counsel you not to be over-hasty, but that ye would put it in respite, this judgment of my lady the queen, for many causes. One is this, though it were so that Sir Lancelot were found in the queen's chamber, yet it might be so that he came thither for none evil. For ye know, my lord,' said Sir Gawayne, 'that my lady the queen hath oftentimes been greatly beholden unto Sir Lancelot more than to any other knight, for oftentimes he hath saved her life, and done battle for her, when all the court refused the queen. And peradventure she sent for him for goodness and for none evil, to reward him for his good deeds that he had done to her in times past. And peradventure my lady the queen sent for him to that intent that Sir Lancelot should acome privily to her, weening that it had be best in eschewing of slander; for oftentimes we do many things that we ween for the best be, and yet peradventure it turneth to the worst. For I dare say,' said Sir Gawayne, 'my lady your queen is to you both good and true. And as for Sir Lancelot, I dare say he will make it good upon any knight living that will put upon him villainy or shame, and in like wise he will make good for my lady the queen.'

'That I believe well,' said King Arthur, 'but I will not that way work with Sir Lancelot, for he trusteth so much upon his hands and his might that he doubteth no man. And therefore for my queen he shall never more fight, for she shall have the law. And if I may get Sir Lancelot, wit you well he shall have as shameful a death.'

'Jesu defend me,' said Sir Gawayne, 'that I never see it nor know it.'

'Why say ye so?' said King Arthur. 'For pardie ye have no cause to love him! For this night last past he slew your brother Sir Agravayne, a full good knight, and almost he had slain your other brother, Sir Mordred, and also there he slew thirteen noble knights. And also remember you, Sir Gawayne, he slew two sons of yours, Sir Florence and Sir Lovel.'

'My lord,' said Sir Gawayne, 'of all this I have a knowledge, which of their deaths sore repents me. But insomuch I gave them warning, and told my brother and my sons aforehand what would fall on the end, and insomuch as they would not do by my counsel, I will not meddle me thereof, nor revenge me nothing of their deaths; for I told them there was no boot to strive with Sir Lancelot. Howbeit I am sorry of the death of my brother and of my two sons, but they are the causers of their own death; for oftentimes I warned my brother Sir Agravayne and I told him of the perils.'

Then said King Arthur unto Sir Gawayne, 'Make you ready in your best armour, with your brethren, Sir Gaheris and Sir Gareth, to bring my queen to the fire, and there to have her judgment.'

'Nay, my most noble king,' said Sir Gawayne, 'that will I never do; for wit you well I will never be in that place where so noble a queen as is my lady, Dame Guinevere, shall take such a shameful end. For wit you well,' said Sir Gawayne, 'my heart will not serve me for to see her die; and it shall never be said that ever I was of your counsel for her death.'

Then said the king unto Sir Gawayne, 'Suffer your brethren Sir Gaheris and Sir Gareth to be there.'

'My lord,' said Sir Gawayne, 'wit you well they will be loath to be there present, by cause of many adventures that is like to fall, but they are young and full unable to say you nay.'

Then spake Sir Gaheris and the good knight Sir Gareth unto King Arthur.

'Sir, ye may well command us to be there, but wit you well it shall be sore against our will. But an we be there by your straight commandment ye shall plainly hold us there excused: we will be there in peaceable wise, and bear none harness of war upon us.'

'In the name of God,' said the king, 'then make you ready, for she shall soon have her judgment.'

'Alas,' said Sir Gawayne, 'that ever I should endure to see this woeful day.'

So Sir Gawayne turned him and wept heartily, and so he went into

his chamber. And so the queen was led forth without Carlisle, and anon she was despoiled into her smock. And then her ghostly father was brought to her, to be shriven of her misdeeds. Then there was weeping, and wailing, and wringing of hands of many lords and ladies, but there were but few in comparison that would bear any armour for to strength the death of the queen.

Then was there one that Sir Lancelot had sent unto [that place] which went to espy what time the queen should go unto her death; and anon as he saw the queen despoiled into her smock and shriven, then he gave Sir Lancelot warning anon. Then was there but spurring and plucking up of horse, and right so they came unto the fire. And who that stood against them, there were they slain; [there might none withstand Sir Lancelot. So all that bare arms and withstood them, there were they slain] full many a noble knight. For there was slain Sir Bellyas le Orgulous, Sir Segwarydes, Sir Gryfflet, Sir Braundiles, Sir Aglovale, Sir Tor; Sir Gauter, Sir Gillymere, Sir Reynolds' three brethren; and Sir Damas, Sir Priamus, Sir Kay le Straunge, Sir Dryaunt, Sir Lambegus, Sir Hermynde; Sir Pertolyp, Sir Perymones, two brethren which were called the Green Knight and the Red Knight.

And so in this rushing and hurling as Sir Lancelot thrang here and there, it misfortuned him to slay Sir Gaheris and Sir Gareth, the noble knight, for they were unarmed and unwares. As the French book saith, Sir Lancelot smote Sir Gareth and Sir Gaheris upon the brainpans, wherethorough they were slain in the field. Howbeit in very truth Sir Lancelot saw them [not]. And so were they found dead among the thickest of the press.

Then Sir Lancelot when he had thus done, and slain and put to flight all that would withstand him, then he rode straight unto Dame Guinevere, and made cast a kirtle and a gown upon her; and then he made her to be set behind him, and prayed her to be of good cheer. Now wit you well the queen was glad that she was at that time escaped from the death. And then she thanked God and Sir Lancelot.

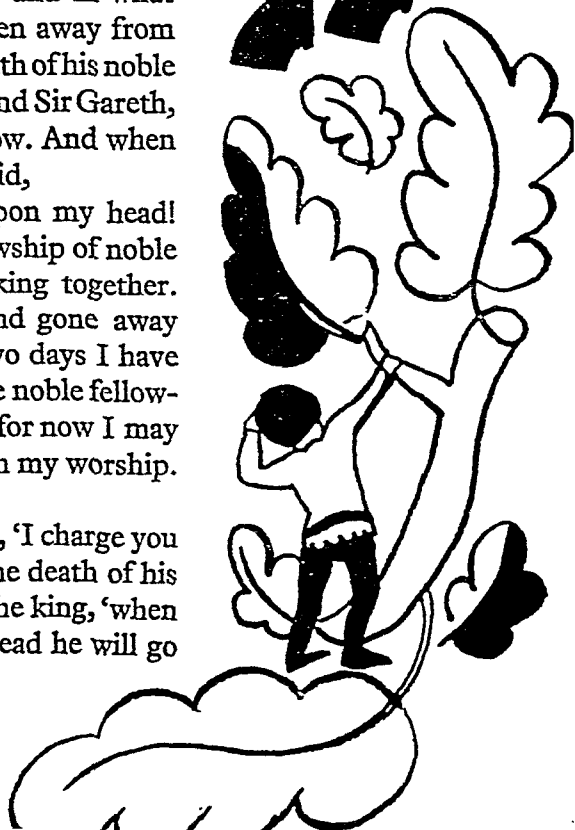
And so he rode his way with the queen, as the French book saith, unto Joyous Gard, and there he kept her as a noble knight should. And many great lords and many good knights were sent him, and many full noble knights drew unto him. When they heard that King Arthur and Sir Lancelot were at debate many knights were glad, and many were sorry of their debate.



NOW turn we again unto King Arthur, that when it was told him how and in what manner the queen was taken away from the fire, and when he heard of the death of his noble knights, and in especial Sir Gaheris and Sir Gareth, then he sowned for very pure sorrow. And when he awoke of his swough, then he said,

‘Alas, that ever I bare crown upon my head! for now have I lost the fairest fellowship of noble knights that ever held Christian king together. Alas, my good knights be slain and gone away from me, that now within these two days I have lost nigh forty knights, and also the noble fellowship of Sir Lancelot and his blood, for now I may never more hold them together with my worship. Now alas that ever this war began!

‘Now, fair fellows,’ said the king, ‘I charge you that no man tell Sir Gawayne of the death of his two brethren, for I am sure,’ said the king, ‘when he heareth tell that Sir Gareth is dead he will go



nigh out of his mind. Mercy Jesu,' said the king, 'why slew he Sir Gaheris and Sir Gareth? For I dare say, as for Sir Gareth, he loved Sir Lancelot of all men earthly.'

'That is truth,' said some knights, 'but they were slain in the hurling as Sir Lancelot thrang in the thickest of the press. And as they were unarmed he smote them and wist not whom that he smote, and so unhappily they were slain.'

'Well,' said Arthur, 'the death of them will cause the greatest mortal war that ever was, for I am sure that when Sir Gawayne knoweth hereof that Sir Gareth is slain, I shall never have rest of him till I have destroyed Sir Lancelot's kin and himself both, other else he to destroy me. And therefore,' said the king, 'wit you well my heart was never so heavy as it is now. And much more I am sorrier for my good knights' loss than for the loss of my fair queen; for queens I might have enow, but such a fellowship of good knights shall never be together in no company. And now I dare say,' said King Arthur, 'there was never Christian king that ever held such a fellowship together. And alas that ever Sir Lancelot and I should be at debate. Ah Agravayne, Agravayne,' said the king, 'Jesu forgive it thy soul, for thine evil will that thou hadst and Sir Mordred thy brother unto Sir Lancelot hath caused all this sorrow.'

And ever among these complaints the king wept and sowned.

Then came there one to Sir Gawayne, and told how the queen was led away with Sir Lancelot, and nigh a four and twenty knights slain.

'Ah Jesu, save me my two brethren,' said Sir Gawayne. 'For full well wist I,' said Sir Gawayne, 'that Sir Lancelot would rescue her, other else he would die in that field; and to say the truth he were not of worship but if he had rescued the queen, insomuch as she should have be brent for his sake. And as in that,' said Sir Gawayne, 'he hath done but knightly, and as I would have done myself an I had stood in like case. But where are my brethren?' said Sir Gawayne, 'I marvel that I see not of them.'

Then said that man, 'Truly, Sir Gaheris and Sir Gareth be slain.'

'Jesu defend!' said Sir Gawayne. 'For all this world I would not that they were slain, and in especial my good brother, Sir Gareth.'

'Sir,' said the man, 'he is slain, and that is great pity.'

'Who slew him?' said Sir Gawayne.

'Sir Lancelot,' said the man, 'slew them both.'

'That may I not believe,' said Sir Gawayne, 'that ever he slew my good brother, Sir Gareth; for I dare say my brother loved him better than me and all his brethren and the king both. Also I dare say, an

Sir Lancelot had desired my brother Sir Gareth with him he would have been with him against the king and us all. And therefore I may never believe that Sir Lancelot slew my brethren.'

'Verily, sir,' said the man, 'it is noised that he slew him.'

'Alas,' said Sir Gawayne, 'now is my joy gone.'

And then he fell down and sowned, and long he lay there as he had been dead. And when he arose out of his swough, he cried out sorrowfully, and said:

'Alas!'

And forthwith he ran unto the king, crying and weeping, and said, 'Ah mine uncle, King Arthur! My good brother Gareth is slain, and so is my brother Sir Gaheris, which were two noble knights.'

Then the king wept, and he both; and so they fell onsowning. And when they were revived then spake Sir Gawayne.

'Sir, I will go and see my brother, Sir Gareth.'

'Sir, ye may not see him,' said the king, 'for I caused him to be interred, and Sir Gaheris both; for I well understood that ye would make over-much sorrow, and the sight of Sir Gareth should have caused your double sorrow.'

'Alas, my lord,' said Sir Gawayne, 'how slew he my brother, Sir Gareth? I pray you tell me.'

'Truly,' said the king, 'I shall tell you as it hath been told me; Sir Lancelot slew him and Sir Gaheris both.'

'Alas,' said Sir Gawayne, 'they bare none arms against him, neither of them both.'

'I wot not how it was,' said the king, 'but as it is said, Sir Lancelot slew them in the thick press and knew them not. And therefore let us shape a remedy for to revenge their deaths.'

'My king, my lord, and mine uncle,' said Sir Gawayne, 'wit you well now I shall make you a promise which I shall hold by my knighthood that from this day forward I shall never fail Sir Lancelot until that one of us have slain that other. And therefore I require you, my lord and king, dress you unto the war, for wit you well I will be revenged upon Sir Lancelot; and therefore, as ye will have my service and my love, now haste you thereto, and assay your friends. For I promise unto God,' said Sir Gawayne, 'for the death of my brother, Sir Gareth, I shall seek Sir Lancelot throughout seven kings' realms but I shall slay him or else he shall slay me.'

'Sir, ye shall not need to seek him so far,' said the king, 'for as I hearsay, Sir Lancelot will abide me and us all within the Castle of

Joyous Gard; and much people draweth unto him, as I hearsay.'

'That may I right well believe,' said Sir Gawayne; 'but my lord,' he said, 'assay your friends, and I will assay mine.'

'It shall be done,' said the king, 'and as I suppose, I shall be big enough to drive him out of the biggest tower of his castle.'

So then the king sent letters and writs throughout all England, both the length and the breadth, for to asummon all his knights. And so unto King Arthur drew many knights, dukes, and earls, that he had a great host.

And when they were assembled, the king informed them how Sir Lancelot had bereft him his queen.

Then the king and all his host made them ready to lay siege about Sir Lancelot, where he lay within Joyous Gard.

And anon Sir Lancelot heard thereof and purveyed him of many good knights; [for with him held many knights], some for his own sake, and some for the queen's sake. Thus they were on both parties well furnished and garnished of all manner of thing that longed unto the war. But King Arthur's host was so great that Sir Lancelot's host would not abide him in the field. For he was full loth to do battle against the king; but Sir Lancelot drew him unto his strong castle with all manner of victual plenty, and as many noble men as he might suffice within the town and the castle.

Then came King Arthur with Sir Gawayne with an huge host, and laid siege all about Joyous Gard, both the town and the castle. And there they made strong war on both parties. But in no wise Sir Lancelot would ride out of his castle of long time; nother he would not suffer none of his good knights to issue out, nother of the town nother of the castle, until fifteen weeks were past.

So it fell upon a day that Sir Lancelot looked over the walls and spake on high unto King Arthur and to Sir Gawayne.

'My lords both, wit ye well all is in vain that ye make at this siege, for here win ye no worship but maugre and dishonour. For an it list me to come myself out and my good knights, I should full soon make an end of this war.'

'Come forth,' said King Arthur unto Sir Lancelot, 'an thou durst, and I promise thee I shall meet thee in the midst of this field.'

'God defend me,' said Sir Lancelot, 'that ever I should encounter with the most noble king that made me knight.'

'Now fie upon thy fair language,' said the king, 'for wit thou well and trust it, I am thy mortal foe, and ever will to my death day; for

thou hast slain my good knights, and full noble men of my blood, that shall I never recover again. Also thou hast lain by my queen, and holden her many winters, and sithen like a traitor taken her away from me by force.'

'My most noble lord and king,' said Sir Lancelot, 'ye may say what ye will, for ye wot well with yourself will not I strive. But thereas ye say that I have slain your good knights, I wot well that I have done so, and that me sore repenteth; but I was forced to do battle with them in saving of my life, other else I must have suffered them to have slain me. And as for my lady, Queen Guinevere, except your person of your highness, and my lord Sir Gawayne, there nis no knight under heaven that dare make it good upon me, that ever I was traitor unto your person. And where it please you to say that I have holden my lady your queen years and winters, unto that I shall ever make a large answer, and prove it upon any knight that beareth the life, except your person and Sir Gawayne, that my lady, Queen Guinevere, is as true a lady unto your person as is any living unto her lord, and that will I make good with my hands. Howbeit it hath liked her good grace to have me in favour, and cherish me more than any other knight; and unto my power again I have deserved her love, for oftentimes, my lord, ye had consented that she should have been brent and destroyed, in your heat, and then it fortune me to do battle for her, and or I departed from her adversary they confessed their untruth, and she full worshipfully excused. And at such times, my lord Arthur,' said Sir Lancelot, 'ye loved me, and thanked me when I saved your queen from the fire; and then ye promised me for ever to be my good lord. And now methinketh ye reward me evil for my good service. And my lord, meseemeth I had lost a great part of my worship in my knighthood an I had suffered my lady, your queen, to have been brent, and insomuch as she should have been brent for my sake. For sithen I have done battles for your queen in other quarrels than in mine own quarrel, meseemeth now I had more right to do battle for her in her right quarrel. And therefore my good and gracious lord,' said Sir Lancelot, 'take your queen unto your good grace, for she is both true and good.'

'Fie on thee, false recreant knight,' said Sir Gawayne. 'For I let thee wit, my lord, mine uncle, King Arthur, shall have his queen and thee both, maugre thy visage, and slay you both and save you whether it please him.'

'It may well be,' said Sir Lancelot, 'but wit thou well, my lord Sir Gawayne, an me list to come out of this castle ye should win me and the queen more harder than ever ye won a strong battle.'

'Now fie on thy proud words,' said Sir Gawayne. 'As for my lady, the queen, wit thou well I will never say her shame. But thou, false and recreant knight,' said Sir Gawayne, 'what cause hadst thou to slay my good brother Sir Gareth, that loved thee more than me and all my kin? And alas thou madest him knight [with] thine own hands; why slewest thou him that loved thee so well?'

'For to excuse me,' said Sir Lancelot, 'it booteneth me not, but by Jesu, and by the faith that I owe unto the high order of knighthood, I would with as a good a will have slain my nephew, Sir Bors de Ganis. And alas that ever I was so unhappy,' said Lancelot, 'that I had not seen Sir Gareth and Sir Gaheris.'

'Thou liest, recreant knight,' said Sir Gawayne, 'thou slewest them in the despite of me. And therefore, wit thou well, Sir Lancelot, I shall make war upon thee, and all the while that I may live be thine enemy.'

'That me repents,' said Sir Lancelot, 'for well I understand it booteneth me not to seek none accordment while ye, Sir Gawayne, are so mischievously set. And if ye were not, I would not doubt to have the good grace of my lord King Arthur.'

'I lieve well, false recreant knight,' said Sir Gawayne, 'for thou hast many long days overlad me and us all, and destroyed many of our good knights.'

'Sir, ye say as it pleaseth you,' said Sir Lancelot, 'yet may it never be said on me, and openly proved, that ever I by forecast of treason slew no good knight, as ye, my lord Sir Gawayne, have done; and so did I never, but in my defence that I was driven thereto, in saving of my life.'

'Ah, thou false knight,' said Sir Gawayne, 'that thou meanest by Sir Lamorak; but wit thou well I slew him!'

'Sir, ye slew him not yourself,' said Sir Lancelot, 'for it had been overmuch for you, for he was one of the best knights christened of his age. And it was great pity of his death.'

'Well, well, Sir Lancelot,' said Sir Gawayne, 'sithen thou enbraidest me of Sir Lamorak, wit thou well I shall never leave thee till I have thee at such avail that thou shalt not escape my hands.'

'I trust you well enough,' said Sir Lancelot, 'an ye may get me I get but little mercy.'

But the French book saith King Arthur would have taken his queen again, and to have been accorded with Sir Lancelot, but Sir Gawayne would not suffer him by no manner of mean. And so then Sir Gawayne

made many men to blow upon Sir Lancelot, and all at once they called him 'False recreant knight!'

But when Sir Bors de Ganis, Sir Ector de Maris, and Sir Lionel heard this outcry, they called unto them Sir Palomydes, and Sir Lavayne, and Sir Urry with many mo knights of their blood, and all they went unto Sir Lancelot, and said thus:

'My lord, wit ye well we have great scorn of the great rebuke that we heard Sir Gawayne say unto you; wherefore we pray you, and charge you, as ye will have our service, keep us no longer within these walls; for we let you wit plainly, we will ride into the field and do battle with them. For ye fare as a man that were afeared, and for all their fair speech it will not avail you, for wit you well Sir Gawayne will never suffer you to accord with King Arthur. And therefore fight for your life and right, an [ye] dare.'

'Alas,' said Sir Lancelot, 'for to ride out of this castle and do battle I am full loath.'

Then Sir Lancelot spake on high unto King Arthur and Sir Gawayne,

'My lords, I require you and beseech you, sithen that I am thus required and conjured to ride into the field, that neither you, my lord King Arthur, nother you Sir Gawayne, come not into the field.'

'What shall we do then?' said Sir Gawayne. 'Is not this the king's quarrel to fight with thee? And also it is my quarrel to fight with thee by cause of the death of my brother Sir Gareth.'

'Then must I needs unto battle,' said Sir Lancelot. 'Now wit you well, my lord Arthur and Sir Gawayne, ye will repent it whensomever I do battle with you.'

And so then they departed either from other; and then either party made them ready on the morn for to do battle, and great purveyance was made on both sides; and Sir Gawayne let purvey many knights for to wait upon Sir Lancelot, for to overset him and to slay him. And on the morn at undern King Arthur was ready in the field with three great hosts.

And then Sir Lancelot's fellowship came out at the three gates in full good array; and Sir Lionel came in the foremost battle, and Sir Lancelot came in the middle, and Sir Bors came out at the third gate.

And thus they came in order and rule, as full noble knights. And ever Sir Lancelot charged all his knights in any wise to save King Arthur and Sir Gawayne.

Then came forth Sir Gawayne from the king's host, and proffered to joust. And Sir Lionel was a fierce knight, and lightly he encountered with him; and therefore Sir Gawayne smote Sir Lionel thoroughout the

body, that he dashed to the earth like as he had been dead. And then Sir Ector de Maris and other mo bare him into the castle.

And anon there began a great stour, and much people were slain; and ever Sir Lancelot did what he might to save the people on King Arthur's party, for Sir Bors and Sir Palomydes and Sir Safer overthrew many knights, for they were deadly knights, and Sir Blamour de Ganis, and Sir Bleoberis de Ganis, with Sir Bellengerus le Beuse, these six knights did much harm; and ever was King Arthur about Sir Lancelot to have slain him, and ever Sir Lancelot suffered him and would not strike again. So Sir Bors encountered with King Arthur, and Sir Bors smote him; and so he alit and drew his sword, and said to Sir Lancelot, 'Sir, shall I make an end of this war?' (For he meant to have slain him.)

'Not so hardy,' said Sir Lancelot, 'upon pain of thy head that thou touch him no more. For I will never see that most noble king that made me knight nother slain nor shamed.'

And therewithal Sir Lancelot alit off his horse and took up the king and horsed him again, and said thus:

'My lord the king, for God's love stint this strife, for ye get here no worship and I would do mine utterance. But always I forbear you, and ye nor none of yours forbeareth not me.

'And therefore, my lord, I pray you remember what I have done in many places, and now am I evil rewarded.'

So when King Arthur was on horseback, he looked on Sir Lancelot; then the tears brast out of his eyen, thinking of the great courtesy that was in Sir Lancelot more than in any other man. And therewith the king rode his way, and might no longer behold him, saying to himself, 'Alas, alas, that ever yet this war began.'

And then either party of the battles withdrew them to repose them, and buried the dead, and searched the wounded men and laid to their wounds soft salves; and thus they endured that night till on the morn. And on the morn by undern they made them ready to do battle, and then Sir Bors led the vaward.

So upon the morn there came Sir Gawayne as brym as any boar, with a great spear in his hand. And when Sir Bors saw him he thought to revenge his brother Sir Lionel of the despite Sir Gawayne gave him the other day. And so as they that knew either other feutered their spears, and with all their might of their horses and themself, so fiercely they met together and so feloniously that either bar other thorough, and so fell both to the bare earth.

And then the battle joined, and there was much slaughter on both parties. Then Sir Lancelot rescued Sir Bors, and sent him into the

castle; but neither Sir Gawayne nother Sir Bors died not of their wounds, for they were well holpen.

Then Sir Lawayne and Sir Urry prayed Sir Lancelot to do his pain, and fight as they do; 'For we see that ye forbear and spare, and that doth us much harm. And therefore we pray you spare not your enemies no more than they do you.'

'Alas,' said Sir Lancelot, 'I have no heart to fight against my lord Arthur, for ever meseemeth I do not as me ought to do.'

'My lord,' said Sir Palomydes, 'though ye spare them never so much all this day they will [never] you thank; and if they may get you at avail ye are but a dead man.'

So then Sir Lancelot understood that they said him truth. Then he strained himself more than he did toforehand, and by cause of his nephew Sir Bors was sore wounded he pained himself the more. And so then within a little while, by evensong time, Sir Lancelot's party the better stood, for their horses went in blood past the fetlocks, there were so many people slain.

And then for very pity Sir Lancelot withheld his knights, and suffered King Arthur's party to withdraw them inside. And so he withdrew his meyny into the castle, and either parties buried the dead, and put salve unto the wounded men. So when Sir Gawayne was hurt, they on King Arthur's party were not so orgulous as they were toforehand to do battle.

So of this war that was between King Arthur and Sir Lancelot it was noised thorough all Christian realms and so it came at the last by relation unto the Pope. And then the Pope took a consideration of the great goodness of King Arthur and of the high prowess of Sir Lancelot that was called the most noblest knight of the world. Wherefore the Pope called unto him a noble clerk that at that time was there present (the French book saith it was the Bishop of Rochester) and the Pope gave him bulls [under lead] and sent them unto the king, charging him upon pain of interdicting of all England, that he take his queen again, and accord with Sir Lancelot.

So when this Bishop was come unto Carlisle he shewed the king his bulls. And when the king understood them he wist not what to do; but full fain he would have been accorded with Sir Lancelot, but Sir Gawayne would not suffer him. But to have the queen he thereto agreed, but in nowise he would suffer the king to accord with Sir Lancelot; but as for the queen, he consented. So the Bishop had of the king his great seal, and his assurance as he was a true and anointed king that Sir Lancelot should go safe and come safe, and that the queen should not

be said unto of the king nother of none other for nothing done of time past. And of all these appointments the Bishop brought with him sure writing, to shew unto Sir Lancelot.

So when the Bishop was come to Joyous Gard, there he shewed Sir Lancelot how he came from the Pope with writing unto King Arthur and unto him. And there he told him the perils if he withheld the queen from the king.

‘Sir, it was never in my thought,’ said Sir Lancelot, ‘to withhold the queen from my lord Arthur, but I keep her for this cause, insomuch as she should have been brent for my sake, meseemeth it was my part to save her life and put her from that danger, till better recover might come. And now I thank God,’ said Sir Lancelot, ‘that the Pope hath made her peace. For God knoweth,’ said Sir Lancelot, ‘I will be a thousandfold more gladder to bring her again than ever I was of her taking away; with this, I may be sure to come safe and go safe, and that the queen shall have her liberty; and never for nothing that hath be surmised afore this time that she never from this stand in no peril. For else,’ said Sir Lancelot, ‘I dare adventure me to keep her from an harder showre than ever yet I had.’

‘Sir, it shall not need you,’ said the Bishop, ‘to dread thus much; for wit you well, the Pope must be obeyed, an it were not the Pope’s worship nother my poor honesty to know you distressed, nother the queen, nother in peril, nother shamed.’

And then he shewed Sir Lancelot all his writing, both from the Pope and King Arthur.

‘This is sure enough,’ said Sir Lancelot, ‘for full well I dare trust my lord’s own writing and his seal, for he was never shamed of his promise. Therefore,’ said Sir Lancelot unto the Bishop, ‘ye shall ride unto the king afore, and recommend me unto his good grace, and let him have knowledging that the same day eight days, by the grace of God, I myself shall bring the queen unto him. And then say ye to my most redoubted king, that I will say largely for the queen, that I shall none except for dread nother for fear, but the king himself and my lord Sir Gawayne, and that is for the king’s love more than for himself.’

So the Bishop departed and came to the king at Carlisle, and told him all how Sir Lancelot answered him; so that made the tears fall out at the king’s eyen. Then Sir Lancelot purveyed him an hundred knights, and all well clothed in green velvet, and their horses trapped in the same to the heels, and every knight held a branch of olive in his hand in token of peace. And the queen had four and twenty gentlewomen following her in the same wise. And Sir Lancelot had twelve coursers

following him, and on every courser sat a young gentleman, and all they were arrayed in white velvet, with sarpis of gold about their quarters, and the horses trapped in the same wise down to the heels, with many ouches, set with stones and pearls in gold to the number of a thousand. And in the same wise was the queen arrayed, and Sir Lancelot in the same, of white cloth of gold tissue. And right so as ye have heard, as the French book maketh mention, he rode with the queen from Joyous Gard to Carlisle. And so Sir Lancelot rode thoroughout Carlisle, and so in to the castle, that all men might behold them. And there was many a weeping eyen.

And then Sir Lancelot himself alit and voided his horse, and took adown the Queen, and so led her where King Arthur was in his seat, and Sir Gawayne sat afore him, and many other great lords.

So when Sir Lancelot saw the king and Sir Gawayne, then he led the queen by the arm, and then he kneeled down, and the queen both. Wit you well then was there many a bold knight there with King Arthur that wept as tenderly as they had seen all their kin dead afore them.

So the king sat still, and said no word. And when Sir Lancelot saw his countenance, he arose up and pulled up the queen with him, and thus he spake full knightly.

‘My most redoubted king, ye shall understand, by the Pope’s commandment and yours, I have brought to you my lady the queen, as right requireth. And if there be any knight, of what degree that ever he be of, except your person, that will say or dare say but that she is true and clean to you, I here myself, Sir Lancelot du Lake, will make it good upon his body, that she is a true lady unto you. But, sir, liars ye have listened, and that hath caused great debate betwixt you and me. For time hath been, my lord Arthur, that ye were greatly pleased with me when I did battle for my lady, your queen; and full well ye know, my most noble king, that she hath be put to great wrong or this time. And sithen it pleased you at many times that I should fight for her, therefore meseemeth, my good lord, I had more cause to rescue her from the fire, when she should have been brent for my sake.

‘For they that told you those tales were liars, and so it fell upon them; for by likelihood had not the might of God been with me, I might never have endured with fourteen knights. And they were armed and afore purposed, and I unarmed and not purposed; for I was sent unto my lady your queen, I wot not for what cause; but I was not so soon within the chamber door, but anon Sir Agravayne and Sir Mordred called me traitor and false recreant knight.’

'By my faith, they called thee right,' said Sir Gawayne.

'My lord Sir Gawayne,' said Sir Lancelot, 'in their quarrel they proved not themselves the best neither in the right.'

'Well well, Sir Lancelot,' said the king, 'I have given you no cause to do to me as ye have done, for I have worshipped you and yours more than any other knights.'

'My lord,' said Sir Lancelot, 'so ye be not displeased, ye shall understand that I and mine have done you oftentimes better service than any other knights have done, in many diverse places; and where ye have been full hard bestead divers times, I have rescued you from many dangers; and ever unto my power I was glad to please you, and my lord Sir Gawayne. In jousts and tournaments, and in battles set, both on horseback and on foot, I have often rescued you, and you my lord Sir Gawayne, and many more of your knights in many diverse places.'

'For now I will make avaunt,' said Sir Lancelot, 'I will that ye all wit that as yet I found never no manner of knight but that I was overhard for him, and I had done mine utterance, God gramercy; howbeit I have been matched with good knights, as Sir Tristram and Sir Lamorak, but ever I had favour unto them and a deeming what they were. And I take God to record, I never was wroth nor greatly heavy with no good knight and I saw him busy and about to win worship; and glad I was ever when I found a good knight that might anything endure me on horseback and on foot. Howbeit Sir Carados of the Dolorous Tower was a full noble knight and a passing strong man, and that wot ye, my lord Gawayne; for he might well be called a noble knight when he by fine force pulled you out of your saddle, and bound you overthwart afore him to his saddle bow. And there, my lord Sir Gawayne, I rescued you, and slew him afore your sight. Also I found your brother Sir Gaheris, and Sir Tarquin leading him bounden afore him; and there also I rescued your brother and slew Sir Tarquin and delivered three score and four of my lord Arthur's knights out of his prison. And now I dare say,' said Sir Lancelot, 'I met never with so strong a knight nor so well fighting as was Sir Carados and Sir Tarquin, and they and I fought to the uttermost.'

'And therefore,' said Sir Lancelot unto Sir Gawayne, 'meseemeth ye ought of right to remember this; for, and I might have your good will, I would trust to God for to have my lord Arthur's good grace.'

'Sir, the king may do as he will,' said Sir Gawayne, 'but wit thou well, Sir Lancelot, thou and I shall never be accorded while we live, for thou hast slain three of my brethren. And two of them thou slew traitorly

and piteously, for they bare none harness against thee, nother none would do.'

'Sir, God would they had been armed,' said Sir Lancelot, 'for then had they been on live. As for Gareth, I loved no kinsman I had more than I loved him; and ever while I live,' said Sir Lancelot, 'I will bewail Sir Gareth his death, not all only for the great fear I have of you, but for many causes which causeth me to be sorrowful. One is that I made him knight; another is, I wot well he loved me aboven all other knights; and the third is, he was passing noble and true, courteous and gentle, and well conditioned. The fourth is, I wist well, anon as I heard that Sir Gareth was dead, I should never after have your love, my lord Sir Gawayne, but everlasting war betwixt us. And also I wist well that ye would [cause] my noble lord King Arthur for ever to be my mortal foe. And as Jesu be my help, and by my knighthood,' said Sir Lancelot, 'I slew never Sir Gareth; nother his brother by my willing; but alas that ever they were unarmed that unhappy day.'

'But this much I shall offer me to you,' said Sir Lancelot, 'if it may please the king's good grace, and you, my lord Sir Gawayne, I shall first begin at Sandwich, and there I shall go in my shirt, bare foot; and at every ten miles' end I shall found and garmake an house of religion, of what order that ye will assign me, with holy convent, to sing and read, day and night, in especial for Sir Gareth's sake and Sir Gaheris. And this shall I perform [from Sandwich unto Carlisle; and every house shall have sufficient livelihood. And this shall I perform] while that I have any livelihood in Christendom; and there is none of all these religious places, but they shall be performed, furnished and garnished with all things as an holy place ought to be. And this were fairer, more holier and more perfect to their souls, than ye, my most noble king, and you, Sir Gawayne, to war upon me, for thereby shall ye get none avail.'

Then all the knights and ladies that were there wept as they were mad, and the tears fell on King Arthur his cheeks.

'Sir Lancelot,' said Sir Gawayne, 'I have right well heard thy language, and thy great proffers. But wit thou well, let the king do as it pleaseth him, I will never forgive thee my brothers' death, and in especial the death of my brother, Sir Gareth. And if mine uncle, King Arthur, will accord with thee, he shall lose my service, for wit thou well,' said Sir Gawayne, 'thou art both false to the king and to me.'

'Sir,' said Sir Lancelot, 'he beareth not the life that may make it good. And ye, Sir Gawayne, will charge me with so high a thing, ye must pardon me, for then needs must I answer you.'

'Nay, nay,' said Sir Gawayne, 'we are past that as at this time, and

'My fair lords,' said Sir Lancelot, 'I well understand you, and as I can I thank you. And ye shall understand, such livelihood as I am born unto I shall depart with you in this manner of wise; that is for to say, I shall depart all my livelihood and all my lands freely among you, and myself will have as little as any of you, for have I sufficient that may long unto my person, I will ask none other riches nother array. And I trust to God to maintain you on my lands as well as ever ye were maintained.'

Then spake all the knights at once, 'Have he shame that will leave you. For we all understand in this realm [will be no] quiet, but ever debate and strife, now the fellowship of the Round Table is broken. For by the noble fellowship of the Round Table was King Arthur upborne, and by their noblesse the king and all the realm was ever in quiet and rest. And a great part, they said all, was because of your most noblesse, Sir Lancelot.'

'Now, truly I thank you all of your good saying! Howbeit, I wot well that in me was not all the stability of this realm, but in that I might I did my devoir. And well I am sure I knew many rebellions in my days that by me and mine were peaced; and that I trow we all shall hear of in short space, and that me sore repenteth. For ever I dread me,' said Sir Lancelot, 'that Sir Mordred will make trouble, for he is passing envious and applieth him much to trouble.'

And so they were accorded to depart with Sir Lancelot to his lands. And to make short this tale, they trussed and paid all that would ask them; and wholly an hundred knights departed with Sir Lancelot at once, and made their avows they would never leave him for weal ne for woe.

And so they shipped at Cardiff, and sailed unto Benwick; some men call it Bayonne, and some men call it Beaune, where the wine of Beaune is. But say the sooth, Sir Lancelot and his nephews was lord of all France, and of all the lands that longed unto France; he and his kindred rejoiced it all thorough Sir Lancelot's noble prowess.

And then he stuffed and furnished and garnished all his noble towns and castles. Then all the people of those lands came unto Sir Lancelot on foot and hands. And so when he had stablished all those countries, he shortly called a parliament; and there he crowned Sir Lionel, King of France; and Sir Bors he crowned him king of all King Claudas' lands; and Sir Ector de Maris, Sir Lancelot's younger brother, he crowned him King of Benwick, and king of all Guienne, which was Sir Lancelot's own lands. And he made Sir Ector prince of them all. And thus he departed, and advanced all his noble knights. And first he advanced them of his blood; as Sir Blamour, he made him Duke of

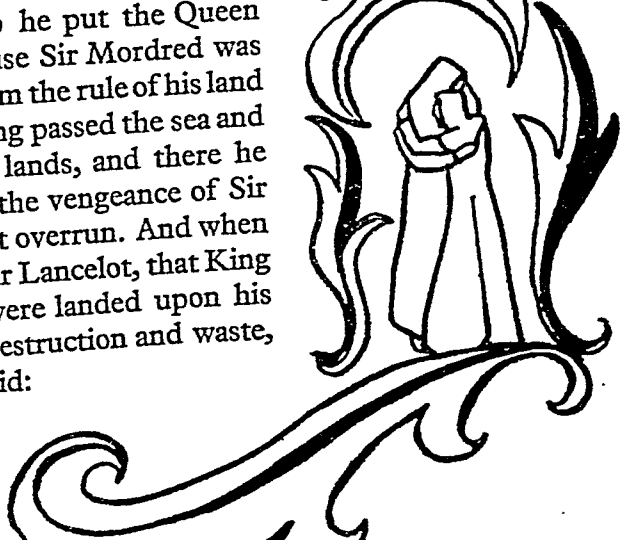
Limousin in Guienne, and Sir Bleoberis he made him Duke of Poitiers. And Sir Gahalantyne he made him Duke of Auvergne, and Sir Galihodyn he made him Duke of Saintogne, and Sir Galyhud he made him Earl of Périgord, and Sir Menaduke he made him Earl of Rouergue, and Sir Vyllyers the Valiant he made him Earl of Bearn, and Sir Hebes le Renommé he made him Earl of Comminges; and Sir Lavayne he made him Earl of Armagnac, and Sir Urry he made him Earl of Astorac, and Sir Neroveus he made him Earl of Pardiack, and Sir Plenorius he made him Earl of Foix, and Sir Selyses of the Dolorous Tower he made him Earl of Marsan, and Sir Melyas de Lyle he made him Earl of Tursan; and Sir Bellengerus le Beuse he made Earl of the Layndes, and Sir Palomydes he made him Duke of Provence, and Sir Safer he made him Duke of Languedoc, and Sir Clegis he gave him the Earldom of Agen, and Sir Sadox he gave the Earldom of Sarlat, and Sir Dynas le Seneschal he made him Duke of Anjou; and Sir Clarrus he made him Duke of Normandy.

Thus Sir Lancelot rewarded his noble knights and many more, that meseemeth it were too long to rehearse.



SO leave we Sir Lancelot in his lands, and his noble knights with him, and return we again unto King Arthur and unto Sir Gawayne, that made a great host aready, to the number of three-score thousand. And all thing was made ready for shipping to pass over the sea to war upon Sir Lancelot and upon his lands. And so they shipped at Cardiff.

And there King Arthur made Sir Mordred chief ruler of all England, and so he put the Queen under his governance; by cause Sir Mordred was King Arthur's son, he gave him the rule of his land and of his wife; and so the king passed the sea and landed upon Sir Lancelot's lands, and there he brent and wasted, thorough the vengeance of Sir Gawayne, all that they might overrun. And when this word was [come] unto Sir Lancelot, that King Arthur and Sir Gawayne were landed upon his lands, and made full great destruction and waste, then spake Sir Bors, and said:



'My lord Sir Lancelot, it is shame that we suffer them thus to ride over our lands. For wit you well, suffer ye them as long as ye will, they will do you no favour an they may handle you.'

Then said Sir Lionel that was wary and wise, 'My lord Sir Lancelot, I will give this counsel, let us keep our strong walled towns until they have hunger and cold, and blow on their nails; and then let us freshly set upon them, and shred them down as sheep in a fold, so that ever after aliens may take ensample how they land upon our lands.'

Then spake King Bagdemagus to Sir Lancelot, and said, 'Sir, your courtesy will shende us all, and your courtesy hath waked all this sorrow; for an they thus override our lands, they shall by process bring us all to nought whilst we thus in holes us hide.'

Then said Sir Galyhud unto Sir Lancelot, 'Sir, here be knights come of kings' blood, that will not long droup, and dare within these walls. Therefore give us leave, like as we be knights, to meet them in the field, and we shall slay them and so deal with them that they shall curse the time that ever they came into this country.'

Then spake seven brethren of North Wales, which were seven noble knights, for a man might seek seven kings' lands or he might find such seven knights. And these seven noble knights said all at once, 'Sir Lancelot, for Christ's sake let us out ride with Sir Galyhud, for we were never wont to cower in castles nother in noble towns.'

Then spake Sir Lancelot, that was master and governor of them all, and said, 'My fair lords, wit you well I am full loath to ride out with my knights for shedding of Christian blood; and yet my lands I understand be full bare for to sustain any host awhile, for the mighty wars that whilom made King Claudas upon this country and upon my father King Ban, and on mine uncle King Bors. Howbeit we will as at this time keep our strong walls. And I shall send a messenger unto my lord Arthur, a treaty for to take; for better is peace than always war.'

So Sir Lancelot sent forth a damsel with a dwarf with her, requiring King Arthur to leave his warring upon his lands; and so she start upon a palfrey, and the dwarf ran by her side, and when she came to the pavilion of King Arthur, there she alit. And there met her a gentle knight, Sir Lucan de Butler, and said,

'Fair damsel, come ye from Sir Lancelot du Lake?'

'Yea, sir,' she said, 'therefore came I hither to speak with my lord the king.'

'Alas,' said Sir Lucan, 'my lord Arthur would accord with Lancelot, but Sir Gawayne will not suffer him.'

And then he said, 'I pray to God, damsel, that ye may speed [well],

for all we that been about the king would that Lancelot did best of any knight living.'

And so with this Sir Lucan led the damsel to the king where he sat with Sir Gawayne, for to hear what she would say. So when she had told her tale, the water ran out of the king's eyen. And all the lords were full glad for to advise the king to be accorded with Sir Lancelot, save all only Sir Gawayne, and he said,

'My lord mine uncle, what will ye do? Will ye now turn again now ye are passed thus far upon your journey? All the world will speak of you villainy and shame.'

'Now,' said King Arthur, 'wit you well, Sir Gawayne, I will do as ye advise me; and yet meseemeth,' said King Arthur, 'his fair proffers were not good to be refused. But sithen I am come so far upon this journey, I will that ye give the damsel her answer, for I may not speak to her for pity, for her proffers been so large.'

Then Sir Gawayne said unto the damsel thus: 'Say ye to Sir Lancelot that it is waste labour now to sue to mine uncle. For tell him, an he would have made any labour for peace, he should have made it or this time, for tell him now it is too late. And say to him that I, Sir Gawayne, so send him word, that I promise him by the faith I owe to God and to knighthood, I shall never leave him till he hath slain me or I him.'

So the damsel wept and departed, and so there was many a weeping eye; and then Sir Lucan brought the damsel to her palfrey; and so she came to Sir Lancelot where he was among all his knights, and when Sir Lancelot had heard her answer, then the tears ran down by his cheeks. And then his noble knights come about him and said:

'Sir Lancelot, wherefore make ye such cheer? Now think what ye are, and what men we are, and let us noble knights match them in midst of the field.'

'That may be lightly done,' said Sir Lancelot, 'but I was never so loath to do battle. And therefore I pray you, sirs, as ye love me, be ruled at this time as I will have you. For I will always flee that noble king that made me knight: and when I may no further, I must needs defend me. And that will be more worship for me and us all than to compare with that noble king whom we have all served.'

Then they held their language, and as that night they took their rest. And upon the morn early, in the dawning of the day, as knights looked out, they saw the city of Benwick besieged round about; and gan fast to set up ladders. And they within kept them out of the town, and beat them mightily from the walls.

Then came forth Sir Gawayne well armed upon a stiff steed, and he came before the chief gate, with his spear in his hand, crying,

‘Where art thou, Sir Lancelot? Is there none of you proud knights that dare break a spear with me?’

Then Sir Bors made him ready, and came forth out of the town, and there Sir Gawayne encountered with Sir Bors, and at that time he smote him down from his horse, and almost he had slain him. And so Sir Bors was rescued and borne into the town.

Then came forth Sir Lionel, and thought to revenge him; and either feutred their spears, and so ran together; and there they met spiteously, but Sir Gawayne had such a grace that he smote Sir Lionel down, and wounded him there passingly sore. And then Sir Lionel was rescued and borne into the town.

And this Sir Gawayne came every day, and failed not but that he smote down one knight or other. So thus they endured half a year, and much slaughter was of people on both parties. Then it befell upon a day that Sir Gawayne came afore the gates armed at all pieces of a noble horse, with a great spear in his hand; and then he cried with a loud voice and said,

‘Where art thou now, thou false traitor, Sir Lancelot? Why hidest thou thyself within holes and walls like a coward? Look out, thou false traitor knight, and here I shall revenge upon thy body the death of my three brethren.’

And all this language heard Sir Lancelot every deal. Then his kin and his knights drew about him, and all they said at once unto Sir Lancelot,

‘Sir, now must you defend you like a knight, other else ye be shamed for ever; for, now ye be called upon treason, it is time for you to stir. For ye have slept over-long and suffered over-much.’

‘So God me help,’ said Sir Lancelot, ‘I am right heavy at Sir Gawayne’s words, for he now chargeth me with a great charge. And therefore I wot it as well as ye, I must needs defend me, other else to be recreant.’

Then Sir Lancelot bad saddle his strongest horse, and bad let fetch his arms, and bring all to the tower of the gate; and then Sir Lancelot spake on high unto the King, and said,

‘My lord Arthur, and noble king that made me knight. Wit you well I am right heavy for your sake, that ye thus sue upon me. And always I forbare you, for an I would be vengeable, I might have met you in midst the field, or this time, and there to have made your boldest knights full tame. And now I have forborne you and suffered you half a year, and Sir Gawayne to do what ye would do. And now I may no

longer suffer to endure but needs I must defend myself, insomuch as Sir Gawayne hath becalled me of treason; which is greatly against my will that ever I should fight against any of your blood, but now I may not forsake it: for I am driven thereto as beast till a bay.'

Then Sir Gawayne said unto Sir Lancelot,

'An thou darst do battle, leave thy babbling and come off, and let us ease our hearts.'

Then Sir Lancelot armed him, and mounted upon his horse, and either of them gat great spears in their hands. And so the host without stood still all apart, and the noble knights of the city came a great number, that when Arthur saw the number of men and knights, he marvelled, and said to himself.

'Alas, that ever Sir Lancelot was against me! For now I see that he hath forborne me.'

And so the covenant was made, there should no man nigh them, nother deal with them, till the one were dead or yelden.

Then Sir Lancelot and Sir Gawayne departed a great way in sunder, and then they came together with all the horse mights as fast as they might run, and either smote other in midst of their shields. But the knights were so strong, and their spears so big, that their horses might not endure their buffets, and so their horses fell to the earth. And then they avoided their horses, and dressed their shields afore them: then they came together and gave many sad strokes on divers places of their bodies, that the blood brast out on many sides.

Then had Sir Gawayne such a grace and gift that an holy man had given to him, that every day in the year, from undern till high noon, his might increased those three hours as much as thrice his strength. And that caused Sir Gawayne to win great honour. And for his sake King Arthur made an ordinance, that all manner of battles for any quarrels that should be done afore King Arthur should begin at undern; and all was done for Sir Gawayne's love, that by likelihood if Sir Gawayne were on the one party he should have the better in battle while his strength endured three hours. But there were that time but few knights living that knew this advantage that Sir Gawayne had, but King Arthur all only.

So Sir Lancelot fought with Sir Gawayne, and when Sir Lancelot felt his might evermore increase, Sir Lancelot wondered, and dread him sore to be shamed: for, as the French book saith, he weened, when he felt Sir Gawayne double his strength, that he had been a fiend and none earthly man. Wherefore Sir Lancelot traced and traversed, and covered

himself with his shield, and kept his might and his breath during three hours. And that while Sir Gawayne gave him many sad brunts [and many sad strokes], that all knights that beheld Sir Lancelot marvelled how that he might endure him, but full little understood they that travail that Sir Lancelot had to endure him.

And then when it was past noon Sir Gawayne's strength was gone and [he] had no more but his own might. When Sir Lancelot felt him so come down, then he stretched him up and strode near Sir Gawayne and said thus,

'Now I feel ye have done your worst! And now my lord Sir Gawayne, I must do my part, for many a great and grievous strokes I have endured you this day with great pain.'

And so Sir Lancelot doubled his strokes and gave Sir Gawayne such a stroke upon the helmet that sideling he fell down upon his one side. And Sir Lancelot withdrew him from him.

'Why withdrawest thou thee?' said Sir Gawayne. 'Turn again, false traitor knight, and slay me out. For an thou leave me thus, anon as I am whole I shall do battle with thee again.'

'Sir,' said Sir Lancelot, 'I shall endure you, by God's grace! But wit thou well, Sir Gawayne, I will never smite a felled knight.'

And so Sir Lancelot departed and went unto the city. And Sir Gawayne was borne unto King Arthur's pavilion, and anon leeches were brought unto him of the best, and searched and salved him with soft ointments. And then Sir Lancelot said,

'Now have good day, my lord the king! For wit you well ye win no worship at these walls; for an I would my knights outbring, there should many a doughty man die, and therefore, my lord Arthur, remember you of old kindness; and howsoever I fare, Jesu be your guide in all places.'

'Now, alas,' said the king, 'that ever this unhappy war began! For ever Sir Lancelot forbearth me in all places, and in likewise my kin, and that is seen well this day what courtesy he showed my nephew Sir Gawayne.'

Then King Arthur fell sick for sorrow of Sir Gawayne, that he was so sore hurt, and by cause of the war betwixt him and Sir Lancelot. So after that they on King Arthur's party kept the siege with little war withoutforth; and they withinforth kept their walls, and defended them when need was.

Thus Sir Gawayne lay sick and unsound three weeks in his tents, with all manner of leechcraft that might be had. And as soon as Sir

Gawayne might go and ride, he armed him at all points, and bestrode a stiff courser, and gat a great spear in his hand, and so he came riding afore the chief gate of Benwick. And there he cried on height and said, 'Where art thou, Sir Lancelot? Come forth, thou false traitor knight and recreant, for I am here, Sir Gawayne, that will prove this that I say upon thee.'

And this language Sir Lancelot heard, and said thus,

'Sir Gawayne, me repents of your foul saying, that ye will not cease of your language. For ye wot well, Sir Gawayne, I know your might and all that ye may do; and well ye wot, Sir Gawayne, ye may not greatly hurt me.'

'Come down, traitor knight,' said he, 'and make it good the contrary with thy hands! For it mishapped me the last battle to be hurt of thy hands; and therefore wit thou well I am come this day to make amends, for I ween this day to lay thee as low as thou laidest me.'

'Jesu defend me,' said Sir Lancelot, 'that ever I be so far in your danger as ye have been in mine, for then my days were done. But Gawayne,' said Sir Lancelot, 'ye shall not think that I shall tarry long, but sithen that ye unknighly call me thus of treason, ye shall have both your hands full of me.'

And then Sir Lancelot armed him at all points, and mounted upon his horse, and gat a great spear in his hand, and rode out at the gate. And both their hosts were assembled, of them without and within, and stood in array full manly, and both parties were charged to hold them still, to see and behold the battle of these two noble knights.

And then they laid their spears in their rests, and so came together as thunder. And Sir Gawayne brake his spear in an hundred pieces to his hand; and Sir Lancelot smote him with a greater might, that Sir Gawayne's horses feet raised, and so the horse and he fell to the earth. Then Sir Gawayne deliverly devoided his horse, and put his shield afore him, and eagerly drew his sword, and bad Sir Lancelot, 'Alight, traitor knight!' and said,

'If a mare's son hath failed me, wit thou well a king's son and a queen's son shall not fail thee!'

Then Sir Lancelot devoided his horse, and dressed his shield afore him, and drew his sword; and so came eagerly together and gave many sad strokes, that all men on both parties had wonder.

But when Sir Lancelot felt Sir Gawayne's might so marvellously increase, he then withheld his courage and his wind, and so he kept him under covert of his might and of his shield; he traced and traversed here and there, to break Sir Gawayne's strokes and his courage. And

the bridal. And by cause of her fair speech Sir Mordred trusted her and gave her leave. And so when she came to London she took the Tower of London, and suddenly in all haste possible she stuffed it with all manner of victual, and well garnished it with men, and so kept it.

And when Sir Mordred wist this, he was passing wroth out of measure. And short tale to make, he laid a mighty siege about the Tower, and made many assaults and threw many great engines unto them, and shot great guns. But all might not prevail, for Queen Guinevere would never, for fair speech nother for foul, never to trust unto Sir Mordred to come in his hands again.

Then came the Bishop of Canterbury, which was a noble clerk and an holy man, and thus he said unto Sir Mordred,

‘Sir, what will ye do? Will ye first displease God and sithen shame yourself, and all knighthood? For is not King Arthur your uncle, no farther but your mother’s brother, and upon her he himself begat you, upon his own sister? Therefore how may you wed your own father’s wife? And therefore, sir,’ said the Bishop, ‘leave this opinion, or else I shall curse you with book and bell and candle.’

‘Do thou thy worst,’ said Sir Mordred, ‘and I defy thee!’

‘Sir,’ said the Bishop, ‘wit you well I shall not fear me to do that me ought to do. And also ye noise that my lord Arthur is slain, and that is not so, and therefore ye will make a foul work in this land.’

‘Peace, thou false priest,’ said Sir Mordred, ‘for an thou chafe me any more I shall strike off thy head!’

So the Bishop departed and did the cursing in the most orgulist wise that might be done. And then Sir Mordred sought the Bishop of Canterbury, for to have slain him. Then the Bishop fled, and took part of his goods with him, and went nigh unto Glastonbury; and there he was a priest-hermit in a chapel, and lived in poverty and in holy prayers, for well he understood what mischievous war was at hand.

Then Sir Mordred sought upon Queen Guinevere by letters and sondis, and by fair means and foul means, to have her come out of the Tower of London; but all this availed nought, for she answered him shortly, openly and privily, that she had lever slay herself than to be married with him.

Then came there word unto Sir Mordred that King Arthur had araised the siege from Sir Lancelot, and was coming homeward with a great host to be avenged upon Sir Mordred; wherefore Sir Mordred made writs unto all the barony of this land. And much people drew unto him. For then was the common voice among them that with King Arthur was never other life but war and strife, and with Sir Mordred

was great joy and bliss. Thus was King Arthur depraved, and evil said of; and many there were that King Arthur had brought up of nought, and given them lands, that might not then say him a good word.

Lo, ye all Englishmen, see ye not what a mischief here was? For he that was the most king and noblest knight of the world, and most loved the fellowship of noble knights, and by him they all were upholden, and yet might not these Englishmen hold them content with him. Lo thus was the old custom and usages of this land, and men say that we of this land have not yet lost that custom. Alas, this is a great default of us Englishmen, for there may no thing please us no term.

And so fared the people at that time, they were better pleased with Sir Mordred than they were with the noble King Arthur; and much people drew unto Sir Mordred, and said they would abide with him for better and for worse. And so Sir Mordred drew with a great host to Dover, for there he heard say that King Arthur would arrive, and so he thought to beat his own father from his own lands; and the most party of all England held with Sir Mordred, the people were so new-fangle.

And so as Sir Mordred was at Dover with his host, so came King Arthur with a great navy of ships, and galleys, and carracks, and there was Sir Mordred ready awaiting upon his landing, to let his own father to land upon the land that he was king over.

Then there was launching of great boats and small, and full of noble men of arms; and there was much slaughter of gentle knights, and many a full bold baron was laid full low, on both parties.

But King Arthur was so courageous that there might no manner of knight let him to land, and his knights fiercely followed him. And so they landed maugre Sir Mordred and all his power, and put Sir Mordred aback, [that he fled and all his people].

So when this battle was done, King Arthur let search his people that were hurt and dead. And then was noble Sir Gawayne found in a great boat, lying more than half dead. When King Arthur knew that he was laid so low, he went unto him and so found him. And there the king made great sorrow out of measure, and took Sir Gawayne in his arms, and thrice he there sowned. And then when he was waked King Arthur said,

'Alas, Sir Gawayne, my sister's son, here now thou liest, the man in the world that I loved most. And now is my joy gone, for now, my nephew Sir Gawayne, I will discover me unto you, that in your person and in Sir Lancelot I most had my joy, and mine affiance. And

now have I lost my joy of you both; wherefore all mine earthly joy is gone from me!

'Ah, mine uncle,' said Sir Gawayne, 'now I will that ye wit that my death day be come. And all I may wit mine own hastiness and my wilfulness; for thorough my wilfulness I was causer of mine own death; for I was this day hurt and smitten upon mine old wound that Sir Lancelot gave me, and I feel myself that I must needs be dead by the hour of noon. And thorough me and [my] pride ye have all this shame and disease, for had that noble knight Sir Lancelot been with you as he was and would have been this unhappy war had never been begun; for he, thorough his noble knighthood and his noble blood, held all your cankered enemies in subjection and daunger. And now,' said Sir Gawayne, 'ye shall miss Sir Lancelot! But alas that I would not accord with him! And therefore, fair uncle, I pray you that I may have paper, pen and ink, that I may write unto Sir Lancelot a letter written with mine own hand.'

So when paper, pen, and ink was brought, then Sir Gawayne was set up weakly by King Arthur, for he was shriven a little afore. And then he took his pen and wrote thus, as the French book maketh mention:

'Unto thee, Sir Lancelot flower of all noble knights that ever I heard of or saw by my days, I, Sir Gawayne, King Lot's son of Orkney and sister's son unto the noble King Arthur, send thee greeting, letting thee to have knowledge that the tenth day of May I was smitten upon the old wound that thou gave me afore the city of Benwick, and thorough that wound I am come to my death-day. And I will that all the world wit that I, Sir Gawayne, knight of the Table Round, sought my death, and not thorough thy deserving, but mine own seeking. Wherefore I beseech thee, Sir Lancelot, to return again unto this realm, and see my tomb, and pray some prayer more other less for my soul. And this same day that I wrote the same sedull, I was hurt to the death, which wound was first given of thine hand, Sir Lancelot; for of a more nobler man might I not be slain.

'Also, Sir Lancelot, for all the love that ever was betwixt us, make no tarrying, but come over the sea in all the goodly haste that ye may, with your noble knights, and rescue that noble king that made thee knight, for he is full straitly bestad with a false traitor, which is my half-brother, Sir Mordred. For he hath crowned himself king, and would have wedded my lady, Queen Guinevere, and so had he done had she not kept the Tower of London with strong hand. And so the tenth day of May last past, my lord King Arthur and we all landed upon them at Dover, and there he put that false traitor, Sir Mordred, to flight. And

so it there misfortunéd me to be smitten upon the stroke that ye gave me of old.

'And at the date of this letter was written, but two hours and a half afore my death, written with mine own hand, and subscribed with part of my heart's blood. And therefore I require thee, most famous knight of the world, that thou wilt see my tomb.'

And then he wept, and King Arthur both, and sowned. And when they were awaked both, the king made Sir Gawayne to receive his Sacrament and then Sir Gawayne prayed the king for to send for Sir Lancelot, and to cherish him aboven all other knights.

And so at the hour of noon Sir Gawayne yielded up the ghost. And then the king let inter him in a chapel within Dover Castle. And there yet all men may see the skull of him, and the same wound is seen that Sir Lancelot gave in battle.

Then was it told the king that Sir Mordred had pyght new field upon Barham Down. And so upon the morn King Arthur rode thither to him, and there was a great battle betwixt them, and much people were slain on both parties. But at the last King Arthur's party stood best, and Sir Mordred and his party fled unto Canterbury.

And then the king let search all the downs for his knights that were slain, and interred them; and salved them with soft salves that full sore were wounded. Then much people drew unto King Arthur, and then they said that Sir Mordred warred upon King Arthur with wrong.

And anon King Arthur drew him with his host down by the seaside westward, toward Salisbury. And there was a day assigned betwixt King Arthur and Sir Mordred, that they should meet upon a down beside Salisbury, and not far from the seaside. And this day was assigned on Monday after Trinity Sunday, whereof King Arthur was passing glad that he might be avenged upon Sir Mordred.

Then Sir Mordred araised much people about London, for they of Kent, Sussex, and Surrey, Essex, Suffolk and Norfolk, held the most party with Sir Mordred. And many a full noble knight drew unto him and also the king; but they that loved Sir Lancelot drew unto Sir Mordred.

So upon Trinity Sunday at night, King Arthur dreamed a wonderful dream, and in his dream him seemed that he saw upon a chafflet a chair, and the chair was fast to a wheel, and thereupon sat King Arthur [in the richest] cloth of gold that might be made. And the king thought there was under him, far from him, an hideous deep black water, and therein was all manner of serpents and worms and wild beasts, foul and

horrible. And suddenly the king thought the wheel turned up-so-down, and he fell among the serpents, and every beast took him by a limb. And then the king cried as he lay in his bed,

‘Help! help!’

And then knights, squires, and yeomen, awaked the king; and then he was so amazed that he wist not where he was. And then so he awaked until it was, and then he fell on slumbering again, not sleeping nor thoroughly waking.

So the king seemed verily that there came Sir Gawayne unto him with a number of fair ladies with him. So when King Arthur saw him, he said,

‘Welcome, my sister’s son, I weened ye had been dead! And now I see thee on live, much am I beholding unto almighty Jesu. Ah, fair nephew, what been these ladies that hither be come with you?’

‘Sir,’ said Sir Gawayne, ‘all these be ladies for whom I have foughten for when I was man living. And all these are those that I did battle for in righteous quarrel; and God hath given them that grace at their great prayer, by cause I did battle [for] them, for their right that they should bring me hither unto you. Thus much hath given me leave God for to warn you of your death; for an ye fight as tomorn with Sir Mordred, as ye both have assigned, doubt ye not ye shall be slain, and the most party of your people on both parties. And for the great grace and goodness that Almighty Jesu hath unto you, and for pity of ye and many mo good men there shall be slain, God hath sent me to you to his special grace, to give you warning that in no wise ye do battle as tomorn, but that ye take a treaty for a month-day. And proffer you largely, so that tomorn ye put in a delay. For within a month shall come Sir Lancelot with all his noble knights, and rescue you worshipfully, and slay Sir Mordred and all that ever will hold him.’

Then Sir Gawayne and all the ladies vanished, and anon the king called upon his knights, squires and yeomen, and charged them wightly to fetch his noble lords and wise bishops unto him. And when they were come the king told them his avision, that Sir Gawayne had told him and warned him that an he fought on the morn he should be slain. Then the King commanded Sir Lucan de Butler, and his brother Sir Bedyvere the Bold with two bishops with them, and charged them in any wise to take a treaty for a month-day with Sir Mordred; ‘And spare not, proffer him lands and goods as much as ye think reasonable.’

So then they departed and came to Sir Mordred, where he had a grim host of an hundred thousand, and there they entreated Sir Mordred long time. And at the last Sir Mordred was agreed for to have Cornwall and

Kent, by King Arthur's days; and after that all England, after the days of King Arthur.

Then were they condescended that King Arthur and Sir Mordred should meet betwixt both their hosts, and every each of them should bring fourteen persons. And so they came with this word unto Arthur.

Then said he, 'I am glad that this is done,' and so he went into the field.

And when King Arthur should depart, he warned all his [host] that an they see any sword drawn, 'Look ye come on fiercely and slay that traitor, Sir Mordred, for I in no wise trust him.' In likewise Sir Mordred warned his host, 'that an ye see any manner of sword drawn, look that ye come on fiercely, and so slay all that ever before you standeth, for in no wise I will not trust for this treaty.' And in the same wise said Sir Mordred unto his host; 'for I know well my father will be avenged upon me.' And so they met as their pointment was, and so they were agreed and accorded thoroughly. And wine was fet, and [they] drank together. Right soon came out an adder of a little heath-bush, and it stung a knight in the foot. And so when the knight felt him so stung, he looked down and saw the adder, and anon he drew his sword to slay the adder, and thought none other harm. And when the host on both parties saw that sword drawn, then they blew beamy trumpets, and horns, and shouted grimly, and so both hosts dressed them together. And King Arthur took his horse, and said, 'Alas this unhappy day!' and so rode to his party, and Sir Mordred in likewise.

And never since was there never seen a more dolefuller battle in no Christian land, for there was but rushing and riding, foyning and striking, and many a grim word was there spoken of either to other, and many a deadly stroke. But ever King Arthur rode thoroughout the battle of Sir Mordred many times and did full nobly as a noble king should do and at all times he fainted never. And Sir Mordred did his devoir that day and put himself in great peril. And thus they fought all the long day, and never stinted till the noble knights were laid to the cold earth. And ever they fought still till it was near night, and by then was there an hundred thousand laid dead upon the earth. Then was King Arthur wood wroth out of measure, when he saw his people so slain from him.

And so he looked about him, and could see no mo of all his host and good knights, left no mo on live but two knights; the one was Sir Lucan de Butler and his brother Sir Bedyvere, and yet they were full sore wounded.

'Jesu mercy,' said the king, 'where are all my noble knights become?

Alas that ever I should see this doleful day! For now,' said King Arthur, 'I am come to mine end. But would to God,' said he, 'that I wist now where were that traitor Sir Mordred, that hath caused all this mischief.'

Then King Arthur looked about and was ware where stood Sir Mordred leaning upon his sword among a great heap of dead men.

'Now give me my spear,' said King Arthur unto Sir Lucan, 'for yonder I have espied the traitor that all this woe hath wrought.'

'Sir, let him be,' said Sir Lucan, 'for he is unhappy. And if ye pass this unhappy day ye shall be right well revenged. And, [good lord, remember ye of your night's dream, and] what the spirit of Sir Gawayne told you to-night, yet God of his great goodness hath preserved you hitherto. And for God's sake, my lord, leave off this, for blessed be God ye have won the field, for yet we been here three on live, and with Sir Mordred is not one of live. And therefore if ye leave off now this wicked day of destiny is past.'

'Now tide me death, tide me life,' said the king, 'now I see him yonder alone he shall never escape mine hands! For at a better avail shall I never have him.'

'God speed you well,' said Sir Bedyvere.

Then the king gat his spear in both his hands, and ran toward Sir Mordred, crying and saying,

'Traitor, now is thy death-day come!'

And when Sir Mordred saw King Arthur, he ran until him with his sword drawn in his hand, and there King Arthur smote Sir Mordred under the shield, with a foyn on his spear, thoroughout the body more than a fathom. And when Sir Mordred felt that he had his death's wound, he thrust himself with the might that he had up to the bur of King Arthur's spear, and right so he smote his father King Arthur, with his sword holden in both his hands, upon the side of the head, that the sword pierced the helmet and the tay of the brain. And there-with Mordred dashed down stark dead to the earth.

And noble King Arthur fell in a swough to the earth, and there he sowned oftentimes. And Sir Lucan and Sir Bedyvere oftentimes hove him up. And so weakly betwixt them they lead him to a little chapel not far from the sea, and when the king was there he thought him reasonably eased.

Then heard they people cry in the field.

'Now go thou, Sir Lucan,' said the king, 'and do me to wit what betokens that noise in the field.'

So Sir Lucan departed, for he was grievously wounded in many places, and so as he yode he saw and hearkened by the moonlight how that

pillers and robbers were come into the field, to pill and to rob many a full noble knight of brooches and bees and of many a good ring and many a rich jewel. And who that were not dead all out, there they slew them for their harness and their riches.

When Sir Lucan understood this work he came to the king as soon as he might, and told him all what he had heard and seen.

'Therefore be my rede,' said Sir Lucan, 'it is best that we bring you to some town.'

'I would it were so,' said the king, 'but I may not stand, my head works so. Ah Sir Lancelot,' said King Arthur, 'this day have I sore missed thee! And alas, that ever I was against thee! For now have I my death, whereof Sir Gawayne me warned in my dream.'

Then Sir Lucan took up the king the one party and Sir Bedyvere the other party and in the lifting up the king sowned, and in the lifting Sir Lucan fell in a sown, that part of his guts fell out of his body, and therewith the noble knight his heart brast. And when the king awoke he beheld Sir Lucan, how he lay foaming at the mouth and part of his guts lay at his feet.

'Alas,' said the king, 'this is to me a full heavy sight, to see this noble duke so die for my sake, for he would have holpen me, that had more need of help than I. Alas that he would not complain him, for his heart was so set to help me. Now Jesu have mercy upon his soul!'

Then Sir Bedyvere wept for the death of his brother.

'Now leave this mourning and weeping, gentle knight,' said the king, 'for all this will not avail me. For wit thou well, an I might live myself, the death of Sir Lucan would grieve me evermore. But my time passeth on fast,' said the king. 'Therefore,' said King Arthur unto Sir Bedyvere, 'take thou here Excalibur, my good sword, and go with it to yonder water's side, and when thou comest there I charge thee throw my sword in that water, and come again and tell me what thou seest there.'

'My lord,' said Sir Bedyvere, 'your commandment shall be done, and lightly bring you word again.'

So Sir Bedyvere departed. And by the way he beheld that noble sword, and the pommel and the haft and all precious stones. And then he said to himself,

'If I throw this rich sword in the water, thereof shall never come good, but harm and loss.'

And then Sir Bedyvere hid Excalibur under a tree, and so as soon as he might he came again unto the king, and said he had been at the water, and had thrown the sword into the water.

'What saw thou there?' said the king.

'Sir,' he said, he saw nothing but waves and winds.

'That is untruly said of thee,' said the king. 'And therefore go thou lightly again, and do my commandment; as thou art to me lief and dear, spare not, but throw it in.'

Then Sir Bedyvere returned again, and took the sword in his hand, and yet him thought sin and shame to throw away that noble sword, and so eft he hid the sword and returned again, and told the king that he had been at the water, and done his commandment.

'What sawest thou there?' said the king.

'Sir,' he said, 'I saw nothing but waters wap and waves wan.'

'Ah, traitor unto me and untrue,' said King Arthur, 'now hast thou betrayed me twice. Who would ween that thou that hast been to me so lief and dear and also named so noble a knight, that thou would betray me for the riches of this sword? But now go again lightly; for thy long tarrying putteth me in great jeopardy of my life, for I have taken cold. And but if thou do now as I bid thee, if ever I may see thee, I shall slay thee [with] mine own hands; for thou wouldst for my rich sword see me dead.'

Then Sir Bedyvere departed and went to the sword and lightly took it up, and so he went unto the water's side. And there he bound the girdle about the hilts, and threw the sword as far into the water as he might. And there came an arm and an hand above the water and took it, and cleyght it, and shook it thrice and brandished, and then vanished with the sword into the water.

So Sir Bedyvere came again to the king, and told him what he saw.

'Alas,' said the king, 'help me hence, for I dread me I have tarried over long.'

Then Sir Bedyvere took the king upon his back, and so went with him to the water's side. And when they were there, even fast by the bank hoved a little barge with many fair ladies in it, and among them all was a queen, and all they had black hoods. And all they wept and shrieked when they saw King Arthur.

'Now put me into that barge,' said the king.

And so he did softly, and there received him three ladies with great mourning. And so they set them down, and in one of their laps King Arthur laid his head. And then the queen said,

'Ah, my dear brother, why have ye tarried so long from me? Alas, this wound on your head hath caught over-much cold.'

And anon they rowed fromward the land, and Sir Bedyvere beheld all those ladies go fromward him. Then Sir Bedyvere cried and said,

'Ah, my lord Arthur, what shall become of me, now ye go from me and leave me here alone among mine enemies?'

'Comfort thyself,' said the king, 'and do as well as thou mayest, for in me is no trust for to trust in. For I must into the vale of Avilion, to heal me of my grievous wound. And if thou hear never more of me, pray for my soul!'

But ever the queen and ladies wept and shrieked, that it was pity to hear. And as soon as Sir Bedyvere had lost the sight of the barge, he wept and wailed, and so took the forest, and went all that night. And in the morning he was ware, betwixt two holts hoar, of a chapel and an hermitage.

Then was Sir Bedyvere fain, and thither he went; and when he came into the chapel, he saw where lay an hermit grovelling on all four, fast thereby a tomb was new graven. When the hermit saw Sir Bedyvere he knew him well, for he was but little tofore Bishop of Canterbury, that Sir Mordred fleyed.

'Sir,' said Sir Bedyvere, 'what man is there here interred that ye pray so fast for?'

'Fair son,' said the hermit, 'I wot not verily, but by deeming. But this same night, at midnight, here came a number of ladies, and brought here a dead corse, and prayed me to inter him. And here they offered an hundred tapers, and they gave me a thousand bezants.'

'Alas,' said Sir Bedyvere, 'that was my lord King Arthur, that lieth here graven in this chapel.'

Then Sir Bedyvere sowned and when he awoke he prayed the hermit that he might abide with him still, there to live with fasting and prayers.

'For from hence will I never go,' said Sir Bedyvere, 'by my will, but all the days of my life here to pray for my lord Arthur.'

'Sir, ye are welcome to me,' said the hermit, 'for I know you better than ye ween that I do; for ye are Sir Bedyvere the Bold, and the full noble duke Sir Lucan de Butler was your brother.'

Then Sir Bedyvere told the hermit all as ye have heard tofore, and so he belafft with the hermit that was beforehand Bishop of Canterbury. And there Sir Bedyvere put upon him poor clothes, and served the hermit full lowly in fasting and in prayers.

Thus of Arthur I find no more written in books that been authorised, nother more of the very certainty of his death heard I never rede, but thus was he led away in a ship wherein were three queens; that one was King Arthur's sister, Queen Morgan le Fay; the other was the Queen of North Galis; the third was the Queen of the Waste Lands. (Also there was Dame Nyneve, the chief lady of the lake, which had wedded Sir Pelleas the good knight; and this lady had done much for King Arthur. And this Dame Nyneve would never suffer Sir Pelleas to be in

no place where he should be in danger of his life; and so he lived unto the uttermost of his days with her in great rest.)

Now more of the death of King Arthur could I never find, but that these ladies brought him to his grave, and such one was interred there which [the] hermit bare witness that sometime was Bishop of Canterbury. But yet the hermit knew not in certain that he was verily the body of King Arthur: for this tale Sir Bedyvere, a knight of the Table Round, made it to be written.

Yet some men say in many parts of England that King Arthur is not dead, but had by the will of our Lord Jesu into another place; and men say that he shall come again, and he shall win the Holy Cross. Yet I will not say that it shall be so, but rather I will say, here in this world he changed his life. And many men say that there is written upon the tomb this: *hic jacet Arturus, Rex quondam Rexque futurus*.

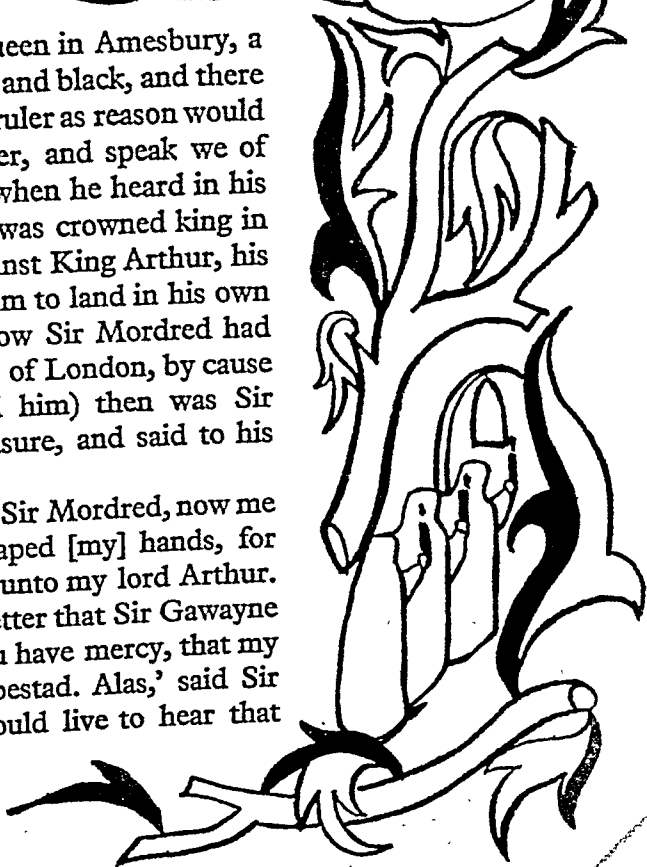
And thus leave I here Sir Bedyvere with the hermit, that dwelled that time in a chapel besides Glastonbury, and there was his hermitage. And so they lived in prayers and fastings and great abstinence.

And when Queen Guinevere understood that King Arthur was dead and all the noble knights, Sir Mordred and all the remnant, then she stole away with five ladies with her, and so she went to Amesbury. And there she let make herself a nun, and ware white clothes and black, and great penance she took upon her as ever did sinful lady in this land. And never creature could make her merry, but ever she lived in fasting, prayers, and alms-deeds, that all manner of people marvelled how virtuously she was changed.



NOW leave we the queen in Amesbury, a nun in white clothes and black, and there she was abbess and ruler as reason would—and now turn we from her, and speak we of Sir Lancelot du Lake, that when he heard in his country that Sir Mordred was crowned king in England, and made war against King Arthur, his own father, and would let him to land in his own land (also it was told him how Sir Mordred had laid a siege about the Tower of London, by cause the queen would not wed him) then was Sir Lancelot wroth out of measure, and said to his kinsmen:

‘Alas, that double traitor Sir Mordred, now me repenteth that ever he escaped [my] hands, for much shame hath he done unto my lord Arthur. For I feel by this doleful letter that Sir Gawayne sent me, on whose soul Jesu have mercy, that my lord Arthur is full hard bestad. Alas,’ said Sir Lancelot, ‘that ever I should live to hear that



most noble king that made me knight thus to be overset with his subject in his own realm. And this doleful letter that my lord Sir Gawayne hath sent me afore his death, praying me to see his tomb, wit you well his doleful words shall never go from mine heart. For he was a full noble knight as ever was born! And in an unhappy hour was I born that ever I should have that mishap to slay first Sir Gawayne, Sir Gaheris the good knight, and mine own friend Sir Gareth that was a full noble knight. Now alas, I may say I am unhappy that ever I should do thus. And yet, alas, might I never have hap to slay that traitor, Sir Mordred!

'Now leave your complaints,' said Sir Bors, 'and first revenge you of the death of Sir Gawayne, on whose soul Jesu have mercy! And it will be well done that ye see his tomb, and secondly that ye revenge my lord Arthur, and my lady Queen Guinevere.'

'I thank you,' said Sir Lancelot, 'for ever ye will my worship.'

Then they made them ready in all haste that might be, with ships and galleys, with him and his host to pass into England. And so at the last he came to Dover, and there he landed with seven kings, and the number was hideous to behold.

Then Sir Lancelot spered of men of Dover where was the King become. And anon the people told him how he was slain, and Sir Mordred too, with an hundred thousand that died upon a day; and how Sir Mordred gave King Arthur the first battle there at his landing, and there was Sir Gawayne slain. 'And upon the morn Sir Mordred fought with the king on Barham Down, and there the king put Sir Mordred to the worse.'

'Alas,' said Sir Lancelot, 'this is the heaviest tidings that ever came [to] my heart! Now, fair sirs,' said Sir Lancelot, 'shew me the tomb of Sir Gawayne.'

And anon he was brought into the Castle of Dover, and so they shewed him the tomb. Then Sir Lancelot kneeled down by the tomb and wept, and prayed heartily for his soul. And that night he let make a dole, [and] all that would come of the town or of the country they had as much flesh and fish, wine and ale, and every man and woman he dealt to twelve pence, come who so would. Thus with his own hand dealt he this money, in a mourning gown; and he wept heartily and prayed the people to pray for the soul of Sir Gawayne.

And on the morn all the priests and clerks that might be gotten in the country and in the town were there, and sang masses of requiem. And there offered first Sir Lancelot, and he offered an hundred pound, and then the seven kings offered, and every of them offered forty pound. Also there was a thousand knights, and every of them offered a pound and the offering dured fro the morn to night.

And there Sir Lancelot lay two nights upon his tomb in prayers and in doleful weeping. Then on the third day Sir Lancelot called the kings, dukes and earls, with the barons, all his noble knights, and said thus,

'My fair lords, I thank you all of your coming into this country with me. But wit you well all, we are come too late and that shall repent me while I live, but against death may no man rebel. But sithen it is so,' said Sir Lancelot, 'I will myself ride and seek my Lady Guinevere. For as I hear say she hath had great pain and much disease; and I hear say that she is fled into the west. And therefore ye all shall abide me here, and but if I come again within these fifteen days, take your ships and your fellowship, and depart into your country, for I will do as I [say] you.'

Then came Sir Bors and said, 'My lord Sir Lancelot, what think ye for to do, now for to ride in this realm? Wit you well ye shall do find few friends.'

'Be as be may as for that,' said Sir Lancelot, 'keep you still here, for I will forth on my journey, and no man nor child shall go with me.'

So it was no boot to strive, but he departed and rode westerly, and there he sought a seven or eight days. And at the last he came to a nunnery and anon Queen Guinevere was ware of Sir Lancelot as she walked in the cloister. And anon as she saw him there she sowned thrice, that all ladies and gentlewomen had work enow to hold the queen up. So when she might speak she called her ladies and gentlewomen to her, and then she said thus,

'Ye marvel, fair ladies, why I make this fare. Truly,' she said, 'it is for the sight of yonder knight that yonder standeth. Wherefore I pray you call him hither me.'

Then Sir Lancelot was brought before her. Then the queen said to all the ladies,

'Through this same man and me hath all this war be wrought, and the death of the most noblest knights of the world; for thorough our love that we have loved together is my most noble lord slain. Therefore, Sir Lancelot, wit thou well I am set in such a plight to get my soul [heal]. And yet I trust thorough God's grace and thorough His passion of His wounds wide, that after my death I may have a sight of the blessed face of Christ Jesu and on Doomsday to sit on His right side, for as sinful as ever I was now are saints in heaven. Therefore, Sir Lancelot, I require thee and beseech thee heartily, for all the love that ever was betwixt us, that thou never see me no more in the visage. And I command thee, on God's behalf, that thou forsake my company.'

And to thy kingdom look thou turn again, and keep well thy realm from war and wrack; for as well as I have loved thee heretofore, mine heart will not serve now to see thee, for thorough thee and me is the flower of kings and [knights] destroyed. And therefore, [go] thou to thy realm, and there take ye a wife, and live with [her with] joy and bliss. And I pray thee heartily to pray for me [to] the Everlasting Lord [that] I may amend my misliving.'

'Now, my sweet madam,' said Sir Lancelot, 'would ye that I should turn again unto my country, and there to wed a lady? Nay, madam, wit you well that I shall never do, for I shall never be so false to you of that I have promised. But the self destiny that ye have taken you to, I will take me to, for the pleasure of Jesu, and ever for you I cast me specially to pray.'

'Ah, Sir Lancelot, if ye will do so and hold thy promise! But I may never believe you,' said the queen, 'but that ye will turn to the world again.'

'Well, madam,' said he, 'ye say as it pleaseth you, for yet wist ye me never false of my promise. And God defend but that I should forsake the world as ye have done! For in the quest of the Sangreal I had that time forsaken the vanities of the world had not your love been. And if I had done so at that time with my heart, will and thought, I had passed all the knights that were in the Sangreal* [except Sir Galahad, my son. And therefore, lady, sithen ye have taken you to perfection, I must needs take me to perfection of right. For I take record of God, in you I have had mine earthly joy; and if I had found you now so disposed, I had cast me to have had you into mine own realm. But sithen I find you thus disposed, I ensure you faithfully, I will ever take me to penance, and pray while my life lasteth, if I may find any hermit other gray or white, that will receive me. Wherefore, madam, I pray you kiss me and never no more.'

'Nay,' said the queen, 'that shall I never do, but abstain you from such works.'

And they departed: but there was never so hard an hearted man but he would have wept to see the dolour that they made, for there was lamentation as they had be stung with spears, and many times they sowned. And the ladies bare the queen to her chamber.

And Sir Lancelot awoke, and went and took his horse, and rode all that day and all night in a forest, weeping. And at last he was ware of an hermitage and a chapel stood betwixt two cliffs; and then he heard

*The Winchester MS. ends here. The remainder is based on Caxton's edition.

a little bell ring to mass. And thither he rode and alit, and tied his horse to the gate, and heard mass.

And he that sang mass was the Bishop of Canterbury.

Both the Bishop and Sir Bedyvere knew Sir Lancelot, and they spake together after mass. But when Sir Bedyvere had told his tale all whole, Sir Lancelot's heart almost brast for sorrow and Sir Lancelot threw his arms abroad, and said, 'Alas, who may trust this world?'

And then he kneeled down on his knee, and prayed the Bishop to shrive him and assoil him; and then he besought the Bishop that he might be his brother. Then the Bishop said, 'I will gladly,' and there he put an habit upon Sir Lancelot. And there he served God day and night with prayers and fastings.

Thus the great host abode at Dover. And then Sir Lionel took fifteen lords with him, and rode to London to seek Sir Lancelot; and there Sir Lionel was slain and many of his lords. Then Sir Bors de Ganis made the great host for to go home, and Sir Bors, Sir Ector de Maris, Sir Blamour, Sir Bleoberis, with mo other of Sir Lancelot's kin, took on them to ride all England overthwart and endlong to seek Sir Lancelot.

So Sir Bors by fortune rode so long till he came to the same chapel where Sir Lancelot was. And so Sir Bors heard a little bell knell, that rang to mass, and there he alit and heard mass. And when mass was done, the Bishop, Sir Lancelot and Sir Bedyvere, came to Sir Bors, and when Sir Bors saw Sir Lancelot in that manner clothing, then he prayed the Bishop that he might be in the same suit. And so there was an habit put upon him, and there he lived in prayers and fasting.

And within half a year, there was come Sir Galyhud, Sir Galyhodyn, Sir Blamour, Sir Bleoberis, Sir Vyllyers, Sir Clarrus, and Sir Gahalan-tyne. So all these seven noble knights there abode still. And when they saw Sir Lancelot had taken him to such perfection, they had no lust to depart, but took such an habit as he had.

Thus they endured in great penance six year. And then Sir Lancelot took the habit of priesthood of the Bishop, and a twelvemonth he sang mass. And there was none of these other knights but they read in books, and help for to sing mass, and rang bells, and did lowly all manner of service. And so their horses went where they would, for they took no regard of no worldly riches, for when they saw Sir Lancelot endure such penance in prayers and fastings, they took no force what pain they endured, for to see the noblest knight of the world take such abstinence that he waxed full lean.

And thus upon a night there came a vision to Sir Lancelot, and charged him, in remission of his sins, to haste him unto Amesbury: 'And

by then thou come there, thou shalt find Queen Guinevere dead. And therefore take thy fellows with thee, and purvey them of an horse-bier, and fetch thou the corse of her, and bury her by her husband, the noble King Arthur.'

So this advision came to Sir Lancelot thrice in one night. Then Sir Lancelot rose up or day, and told the hermit.

'It were well done,' said the hermit, 'that ye made you ready, and that ye disobey not the advision.'

Then Sir Lancelot took his seven fellows with him, and on foot they yede from Glastonbury to Amesbury, the which is little more than thirty mile, and thither they came within two days, for they were weak and feeble to go.

And when Sir Lancelot was come to Amesbury within the nunnery, Queen Guinevere died but half an hour afore. And the ladies told Sir Lancelot that Queen Guinevere told them all or she passed that Sir Lancelot had been priest near a twelvemonth. 'And hither he cometh as fast as he may to fetch my corse, and beside my lord King Arthur he shall bury me.' Wherefore the queen said in hearing of them all, 'I beseech Almighty God that I may never have power to see Sir Lancelot with my worldly eyen!'

'And thus,' said all the ladies, 'was ever her prayer these two days, till she was dead.'

Then Sir Lancelot saw her visage, but he wept not greatly, but sighed. And so he did all the observance of the service himself, both the dirge, and on the morn he sang mass. And there was ordained an horse-bier; and so with an hundred torches ever brenning about the corse of the queen, and ever Sir Lancelot with his eight fellows went about the horse-bier, singing and reading many an holy orison, and frankincense upon the corse incensed.

Thus Sir Lancelot and his eight fellows went on foot from Amesbury unto Glastonbury; and when they were come to the chapel and the hermitage, there she had a dirge with great devotion. And on the morn the hermit that sometime was Bishop of Canterbury sang the mass of requiem with great devotion, and Sir Lancelot was the first that offered, and then also his eight fellows. And then she was wrapped in cered cloth of Rennes, from the top to the toe, in thirtyfold, and after she was put in a web of lead, and then in a coffin of marble.

And when she was put in the earth Sir Lancelot swooned, and lay long still, while the hermit came and awaked him, and said:

'Ye be to blame, for ye displease God with such manner of sorrow making.'

'Truly,' said Sir Lancelot, 'I trust I do not displease God, for He knoweth mine intent: for my sorrow was not, nor is not, for any rejoicing of sin, but my sorrow may never have end. For when I remember of their beauty and of their noblesse, that was both with her king and with her, so when I saw his corse and her corse so lie together, truly mine heart would not serve to sustain my careful body. Also when I remember me how by my default and mine orgule and my pride, that they were both laid full low, that were peerless that ever was living of Christian people, wit you well,' said Sir Lancelot, 'this remembered, of their kindness and mine unkindness, sank so to mine heart, that I might not sustain myself.' So the French book maketh mention.

Then Sir Lancelot never after ate but little meat, nor drank, till he was dead, for then he sickened more and more and dried and dwined away. For the Bishop nor none of his fellows might not make him to eat, and little he drank, that he was waxen by a cubit shorter than he was, that the people could not know him. For evermore, day and night, he prayed, but sometime he slumbered a broken sleep. Ever he was lying grovelling on the tomb of King Arthur and Queen Guinevere, and there was no comfort that the Bishop, nor Sir Bors, nor none of his fellows, could make him: it availed not.

So within six weeks after, Sir Lancelot fell sick, and lay in his bed. And then he sent for the Bishop that there was hermit, and all his true fellows.

Then Sir Lancelot said with dreary steven, 'Sir Bishop, I pray you give to me all my rites that longeth to a Christian man.'

'It shall not need you,' said the hermit and all his fellows, 'it is but heaviness of your blood. Ye shall be well mended by the grace of God tomorn.'

'My fair lords,' said Sir Lancelot, 'wit you well my careful body will into the earth; I have warning more than now I will say. Therefore give me my rites.'

So when he was houseled and eneled and had all that a Christian man ought to have, he prayed the Bishop that his fellows might bear his body to Joyous Gard. (Some men say it was Alnwick, and some men say it was Bamborough.)

'Howbeit,' said Sir Lancelot, 'me repenteth sore, but I made mine avow sometime, that in Joyous Gard I would be buried. And by cause of breaking of mine avow, I pray you all, lead me thither.'

Then there was weeping and wringing of hands among his fellows.

So at a season of the night they all went to their beds, for they all

lay in one chamber. And so after midnight, against day, the Bishop that was hermit, as he lay in his bed asleep, he fell upon a great laughter. And therewith all the fellowship awoke, and came to the Bishop, and asked him what he ailed.

'Ah, Jesu mercy,' said the Bishop, 'why did ye awake me? I was never in all my life so merry and so well at ease.'

'Wherefore?' said Sir Bors.

'Truly,' said the Bishop, 'here was Sir Lancelot with me, with mo angels than ever I saw men in one day. And I saw the angels heave up Sir Lancelot unto heaven, and the gates of heaven opened against him.'

'It is but dretching of swevens,' said Sir Bors, 'for I doubt not Sir Lancelot aileth nothing but good.'

'It may well be,' said the Bishop. 'Go ye to his bed, and then shall ye prove the sooth.'

So when Sir Bors and his fellows came to his bed they found him stark dead, and he lay as he had smiled, and the sweetest savour about him that ever they felt. Then was there weeping and wringing of hands, and the greatest dole they made that ever made men.

And on the morn the Bishop did his mass of requiem, and after the Bishop and all the nine knights put Sir Lancelot in the same horse-bier that Queen Guinevere was laid in tofore that she was buried. And so the Bishop and they all together went with the body of Sir Lancelot daily, till they came to Joyous Gard; and ever they had an hundred torches burning about him.

And so within fifteen days they came to Joyous Gard. And there they laid his corse in the body of the choir, and sang and read many psalters and prayers over him and about him. And ever his visage was laid open and naked, that all folks might behold him; for such was the custom in tho days, that all men of worship should so lie with open visage till that they were buried.

And right thus as they were at their service, there came Sir Ector de Maris, that had seven year sought all England, Scotland, and Wales, seeking his brother, Sir Lancelot. And when Sir Ector heard such noise and light in the choir of Joyous Gard, he alit and put his horse from him, and came into the choir, and there he saw men sing [and] weep, and all they knew Sir Ector, but he knew not them.

Then went Sir Bors unto Sir Ector, and told him how there lay his brother, Sir Lancelot, dead. And then Sir Ector threw his shield, sword, and helm from him, and when he beheld Sir Lancelot's visage, he fell down in a swoon. And when he waked it were hard any tongue to tell the doleful complaints that he made for his brother.

'Ah Lancelot,' he said, 'thou were head of all Christian knights! And now I dare say,' said Sir Ector, 'thou Sir Lancelot, there thou liest, that thou were never matched of earthly knight's hand. And thou were the courteoust knight that ever bare shield. And thou were the truest friend to thy lover that ever bestrade horse, and thou were the truest lover of a sinful man that ever loved woman, and thou were the kindest man that ever struck with sword. And thou were the goodliest person that ever came among press of knights, and thou was the meekest man and the gentlest that ever ate in hall among ladies, and thou were the sternest knight to thy mortal foe that ever put spear in the rest.'

Then there was weeping and dolour out of measure. Thus they kept Sir Lancelot's corse on loft fifteen days, and then they buried it with great devotion. And then at leïsure they went all with the Bishop of Canterbury to his hermitage and there they were together more than a month. Then Sir Constantyne, that was Sir Cador's son of Cornwall, was chosen king of England, and he was a full noble knight, and worshipfully he ruled this realm. And then this King Constantyne sent for the Bishop of Canterbury, for he heard say where he was. And so he was restored unto his Bishopric, and left that hermitage. And Sir Bedyvere was there ever still hermit to his life's end.

Then Sir Bors de Ganis, Sir Ector de Maris, Sir Gahalantyne, Sir Galyhud, Sir Galyhodyn, Sir Blamour, Sir Bleoberis, Sir Vyllyers le Valiant, Sir Clarrus of Clermont, all these knights drew them to their countries. Howbeit King Constantyne would have had them with him, but they would not abide in this realm. And there they all lived in their countries as holy men.

And some English books make mention that they went never out of England after the death of Sir Lancelot, but that was but favour of makers. For the French book maketh mention, and is authorised, that Sir Bors, Sir Ector, Sir Blamour, and Sir Bleoberis went into the Holy Land, thereas Jesu Christ was quick and dead. And anon as they had stabilised their lands, for, the book saith, so Sir Lancelot commanded them for to do or ever he passed out of this world, [there] these four knights did many battles upon the miscreants or Turks. And there they [died] upon a Good Friday for God's sake.

Here is the end of the whole book of King Arthur and of his noble knights of the Round Table, that when they were wholly together there was ever an hundred and forty. And here is the end of 'The Death of Arthur.'

I pray you all, gentlemen and gentlewomen that readeth this book of Arthur and his knights from the beginning to the ending, pray for me while I am on live, that God send me good deliverance. And when I am dead, I pray you all pray for my soul.

For this book was ended the ninth year of the reign of King Edward the Fourth, by Sir Thomas Malory, knight, as Jesu help him for his great might, as he is the servant of Jesu both day and night.]

GLOSSARY

- abait*, set on.
adretched, perturbed.
affiance, trust.
after, afterwards.
allegiance, alleviation.
almeries, libraries.
althers, your, of you all.
an, if.
anon, quickly, at once.
appelled, accused.
arrest, capture.
arson, saddle-bow.
assayed, put to the test.
assoiled, absolved.
assotted, infatuated.
astonied, dazed, stunned, dumb-founded.
avised, arranged.
avoid, dismount from, withdraw from.
await, suspicious watch.
award, custody, care.
bain, bath.
bait, kill.
battle, subdivision of army.
beamys, trumpets.
beaver, the face-guard of a helmet, which could be raised.
bebled, covered with blood.
bees, rings, bracelets.
behight, promised.
belafft, remained.
bestead, *bestad*, beset with.
betaught, commended, entrusted.
bezants, gold coins (first minted at Byzantium).
bisene, dressed.
bobbaunce, boasting.
boot, use.
bounty, kindness, favour, generosity, goodness.
brast, broke, burst, gushed.
brayde, jerk, sudden movement.
brenning, burning.
breke, breeches.
Bretayne, Brittany.
brym, fierce.
bur, broad ring on a spear to protect the hand.
caitiff, base.
cantel, portion cut off.
carrack, large cargo-ship.
cered, waxed.
chafflet, scaffold, platform.
charged, laden.
chariot, cart.
clean, pure, innocent ; or excellent.
clene, complete, completely.
cleyght, clasped.
clipping, embracing.
costed, followed.
courtelage, piece of ground.
Cure Hardy, brave heart.
dare, (to) remain motionless.
defended, forbidden.
deliverly, adroitly, quickly.
departed, parted.
depreve, convict.
devoided, removed from, got out of the way of.
dight, prepared.
disparbeled, dispersed.
distained, dishonoured.
distress, attack.
divined, wasted, pined.
dole, lamentation.
done, gift.
dress, make ready, prepare.
dretching, trouble, torment.
droup, cower, lie hidden.
eft, again.
enbraided, upbraided.
enchafed, to make warm, to inflame.
enchleve, (to) achieve, win, perform.
endlong, along, from end to end.
eneled, anointed, having received the extreme unction.
enforce, (to) rape ; or exert oneself.
engine, device, machination.
entromedded, mingled.
erst, previously.
estures, rooms.
eves, edge, margin.
fain, glad, eager.
farn, treated.

favour of makers, partiality of the writers.

fet, fetched.

feut, *fewt*, track.

feuter (a spear), to fix (a spear) in its rest.

fleymed, banished.

force, see 'no force'.

forthink, (to) regret.

for why, because.

foyned, thrust.

freshly, gaily.

fryck, strong, vigorous.

Galis, Wales.

gan, began to.

gar, cause, command.

glaive, spear, lance.

go, walk.

grete, boastful.

guest, man, stranger.

hete, reproach.

hight, was named.

hilled, covered, wrapped.

hough-bone, back of knee joint.

hoving, rising.

inlike, alike.

inlong, similarly.

joined, imposed.

latten, brass.

layne, conceal.

lead, lead seal.

Lechés les alere, Let them go.

leech-craft, skill in surgery.

left, desisted, refrained.

leman, lover.

let, (1) cause, order (2) hinder.

lever, rather.

lief, (1) dear, welcome, (2) gladly, willingly.

life, life-story ; or life.

likely, good looking.

likeness, semblance, appearance.

lycours, lecherous.

lyth, joint.

makeless, peerless, unequalled.

makers, see 'favour'.

mal, evil.

marches, borders.

mares, marshes.

masteries, violent acts.

maugre thine head, against thy will, in spite of all thou canst do.

meaned, pitied.

meat, food, meal.

mickle, much, greatly.

monour, behaviour.

nearhand, nearly.

new-fangle, fond of new things.

nigh, approach.

no force, that does not matter.

nould, would not.

of, at, about, by, from, out of, for, during, into, concerning, etc.

or, ere, before.

orgulous, proud, boastful.

ouches, clasps, ornaments.

ought, owned, owed.

overlad, domineered over, oppressed.

overthwart and endlong, all over.

paid, pleased.

pain, to do his, to do his utmost.

paramour, lover.

pardie, by God.

parters, umpires.

party, part.

play, wound.

prime, first hour of the day.

pucell, chaste young man.

pyght, pitched.

pyke, go away.

quarrel, short, heavy arrow.

quick, alive.

race, (to) snatch, pull ; or rush.

rase, (to) cut, slash.

rasure, scratch, mark.

ravish, (to) fetch, bring.

rearmain, back-handed stroke.

rede, advice.

rejoiced, enjoyed, possessed.

renommé, reputation.

return, turn.

reverse, with back-handed blows.

rude, heavy.

sad, severe, heavy.
sadly, soundly.
samite, rich silk.
sarpis, chains (?).
searched, examined.
sedull, document, letter.
sendal, fine silk or linen.
sered, wrapped it in a cerecloth.
shende, injure.
shirly, shrilly.
showre, conflict.
siege, seat.
sithen, since then, afterwards.
skyft, rid.
slade, valley, glade.
sod, boiled.
soil, earth.
sondis, messengers.
sowgh, *sawn*, swoon.
sparhawk, sparrowhawk.
speed, succeed.
spered, inquired.
spiteously, violently.
steven, voice.
stour, battle, conflict.
strait, narrow.
streng, leash.
sufferance, permission, will.
suit, sort, kind.
sweven, dream.
sye, saw.
syne, since.

taught, led, taken.
tay, outer membrane.
term, space of time.
to-brast, broke in pieces, burst.
trasing, treading.
trete, ? lying in wait.
trussed, equipped.

unbecast, (to) cast.
undern, about 9 a.m.
unhyll, uncovered.
unneth, hardly.
unsyker, insecure, unstable.
utterance, utmost.

vaward, vanguard.
vengeably, cruelly.

wan, darken.
wap, lap.
warn, prevent.
welde, possess.
whorled, jumped.
wight, strong, stalwart.
wise, manner, way.
wist, knew.
wit, know.
wood, mad.
wordly, earthly.
worship, honour, glory; or worship.

yode, went.

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